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A DETECTIVE STORY

THE CLUE IN THE DARK ROOM

BY · HAMILTON · CRAIGIE

No. 67 will contain the story "The Tongue of Osiris," by Marc Edmund Jones

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THE CLUE IN THE DARK ROOM

By HAMILTON CRAIGIE

CHAPTER ONE

POLICE CHIEF HARBIN, of New Norcia, New York, glanced up at the trim figure in blue serge before him, and remarked heavily, a shade of petulance in his tone:

"Well—that's all I c'n tell you, Mr.—er—Mason."

He consulted the square of pasteboard in his hand.

"There were two of 'em—one with a Van Dyke beard, with th' thumb of his right hand missing—both dressed in dark clothes—gray soft hats—they were last seen at Silsbee's restaurant—after that——"

He spread his thick fingers in an expressive gesture.

It was plain to be seen that the Police Chief of New Norcia did not relish the presence of the detective from the big city, notwithstanding the latter's coming in response to the urgent wire which he had despatched only the day previous. But the state-wide epidemic of bad money which had been prevalent for the past fortnight necessitated a more than merely local police activity, and the small town official's S O S had been prompted by a grudging realization of the facts, however indigestible a morsel he found them for his rather high-stomached pride.

The counterfeiters, however, might or might not be working alone, but at any rate their activities appeared to stamp them, almost certainly, as of metropolitan origin; therefore, he had acted promptly enough, be it said, under the circumstances.

But he surveyed the man before him with an

ill-concealed hostility which was evident in the supercilious glance with which he took in the well-tailored suit, the slim, erect figure, the faultless sheen of the tan shoes, and the youthful, almost boyish countenance which, at a superficial estimate, seemed to accord ill with the conventional notion of the professional sleuth.

A more careful observer, however, might have seen something more than blandness in the face, beheld in the deep-set eyes a sophistication which was apparently belied by the almost studied innocence of the parted lips. But then, lese-majesty, we had almost said that the police chief of New Norcia was not a careful observer.

Something very like a smile appeared for a brief flicker upon Mason's face as he enunciated briskly:

"Thanks, chief. And now, if you don't mind, I'll just drop in at Silsbee's, I think you said; then I'll roll my hoop, as the saying is, after these gentlemen. Well, good-by. Look me up some time when you're in the city."

And with a brief hand-clasp the Secret Service man was gone.

The proprietor of Silsbee's all-night lunch and cafeteria could add but little to Harbin's description of the two men, but the sleepy-eyed young man who faced him seemed all at once to awake with an astonishing swiftness when Silsbee, producing ponderously from an inner pocket a worn leather wallet, extended it importantly, with the remark:

"This here wallet now, th' feller with the Van Dyke, he dropped it—I know 'twuz his—I seen him open it, but, shucks, there wan't nothin' in it but some old papers," he added naively, and then drew back in offended dignity as the detective almost snatched it out of his hand in one of his hasty movements.

Mason held it for a moment tentatively, as if judging its weight, then abruptly he did a curious thing.

As he stood for a moment with closed eyes his nostrils expanded oddly, as if in a deep inhalation of the blended odors of the cheap eating-place. For a moment he stood, his head thrown back, almost theatrically, as it seemed, even to the slow intelligence of the restaurant-keeper.

Then, like a pointer dog, he bent over the wallet in his hand, peering, as with near-sighted eyes, into its various compartments—inhaled deeply once—and then straightened with a jerk, his eyes shining, his delicate nostrils quivering, as he remarked abruptly:

"The next train to New York—right away? Fine! Thanks, old man—so long."

And he was out of the restaurant with great strides, and on his way to the railroad station even as the amazed "Waal, I sw.an t' man!" of the bewildered restaurateur was uttered to the empty doorway.

CHAPTER TWO

ARRIVED in New York, Mason went straight to Police Headquarters, where, with his assistant, Trask, he made an exhaustive search of the Rogues' Gallery, and selected a number of photographs from the voluminous files.

With these in his possession he was leaving the police station with Trask. They had spent more time there than they had thought, and it had been mid-afternoon when they had arrived; and as they issued from the building the soft dusk of a May evening enveloped them.

The street lamps were coming on here and there, but just before them, as they entered a narrow alley, was deep gloom, unrelieved by any light, where tall buildings, warehouses, for the most part, towered on either hand, like the steep sides of a canyon.

They were in the stronghold of the gangs, the clans, the tongs; it was a chancy neighborhood, even by day, and just now seemed doubly forbidding—menacing—as if in that blackness there lurked an indefinable peril, a hidden danger.

Strangely enough, also, as they had entered the alley, there had fallen a sudden silence, like the tension before storm, a breathlessness, as if the air roundabout had been sucked into a vacuum by some huge condenser in the hand of a giant.

Suddenly Mason's hand closed on his companion's arm in a grip of iron.

"Keep going, Jim," he whispered. "I thought I saw—I heard——"

But the words were never finished. Suddenly, as by a conjurer's trick, there came a blinding illumination directly before them. With a sputtering hiss an arc lamp burst into flame a few paces further on, and in its radiance, etched against the black wall of darkness just beyond, crouching figures broke off to right and left at a stooping run.

A high sing-song voice was followed by a guttural curse:

"Chê-êrh-lai! (Come here!)" And then:

"There they are—th' damn dicks; now to get 'em!"

There came the rattle of an automatic, spitting a stream of bullets, a surging rush of figures, the impact of fist on bone and flesh, grunts, groans, curses. Afterward Mason swore that it was the light alone that saved them, but at the moment both he and Trask were at the center of a whirlpool of storm, eddying about them in a circle of flashing knives and the spitting of guns.

But the very number of their attackers aided the detectives in the unequal contest. As well as he could determine, Mason had counted eight of their assailants in the first rush. His automatic had accounted for two, and Trask's for another, bringing the odds more nearly even; but there was no telling when the gangsters would

receive reinforcements. Mason had had no time to blow his police whistle; at any rate, the surprise upon which their attackers had evidently counted had, in a measure, failed.

It was then as he sent the last shot from his automatic at a snarling face which rose up almost at his elbow that he heard a groan as though somebody was in pain.

"Mason—they've—got me!"

Not for nothing had Mason earned a reputation as the premier athlete of the department in the days when he had been just "one of the finest." Nor had time dulled the keen flame of his fighting spirit.

"Coming, Jim!" he shouted above the turmoil, and dove headlong into the press.

A gunman is a good deal of a rat, but, unlike a rat, he will not always fight when cornered. Also, cold steel or hot lead are far more to his liking than a stand-up give-and-take, for which he has no stomach at all.

Mason clubbed his empty gun, hurling it into the face of the man nearest him; then, like a battering-ram, a human thunderbolt, he followed it. A gun blazed in his face, but he gave it no heed; a hairy hand, like a claw, holding a knife, thrust at his heart. What followed happened with the speed of light.

There came a sharp crack, like the breaking of a stick; a groaning curse; the knife clattered to the cobbles. Almost with the same motion with which he had broken the thug's wrist Mason's fist curved in a short arc, there came the spank of a clean-cut blow, a choked gurgle, a face leered over his shoulder, mouthing a stream of curses, then it was blotted out as a savage, backhanded swing smashed it into oblivion.

A berserker madness seemed to have seized upon Mason, but even as he multiplied himself the image of a face, like the sudden stoppage of a film picture, persisted in his mind's eye, a face long and flat, with high cheek-bones and cruel, straight-lipped mouth.

"You—there—old man?" he panted as he parried the blow of a slung-shot with his left forearm, countering with his right on a human face. He heard a weak "All there—chief," as there sounded the rolling rattle of a night-stick, the roar of a motor, and into the alley, full speed, dashed the patrol.

The rest was a confused medley of exclamation and question. But through it all, as he helped his assistant into the wagon (Trask's hurts proved to be more superficial than dangerous) there persisted the image of that face, with its high cheek-bones and cruel mouth.

But as he undressed for bed a little later he felt an unaccustomed flatness in his pocket where previously had been the bulge of his wallet. His exploring fingers came away empty. The wallet was gone, and with it the photographs.

CHAPTER THREE

IT was at the end of the third day following the attack in the alley. The two men had returned to Mason's office in the Cutler Building, weary, unspeakably worn, and, if the truth be told, somewhat discouraged, although it was never Mason's way to admit even the possibility of defeat while there remained even the most tenuous thread—the slenderest clue which wit could discover and perseverance unravel.

"You found nothing at the hospitals, Jim?" queried his superior wearily. "Or at any of the hop joints?"

"No, sir, not a thing. I combed them all over, as you instructed. There was just nothing," came the reply.

Although he had felt that this would be the answer to his question, Mason frowned.

"Well, I must say it's mighty queer," he mused aloud. "I was dead certain—it was a 'moral,' as they say at the track. W-e-e-l——" his voice trailed off into silence, his brow furrowed, his deep-set eyes contracting to pin-points of concentration.

The task before them had begun to assume the aspect of a labyrinthine maze.

Mason, as was his wont when faced by an apparently insurmountable mental hurdle, was leaning forward in his chair, clenched fists extended before him, eyes fixed on vacancy in a peculiar stare which seemed to envisage an opponent invisible to all save himself.

It was as if by the very silent concentration of his will he was striving by sheer mental suggestion to hypnotize out of the void the secret which he sought—to project his personality, as it were, into and through the problem which reared itself, like an intangible yet actual and impenetrable barrier to his further progress. And that there were those who wished to hinder that progress he was now assured. The attack in the alley had at least shown that some one was vitally interested in eliminating himself and Trask as further factors in a case which he began to suspect was developing a blind alley, in very truth.

Trask, observing him from where he had been going over a pile of correspondence at his own desk, thought that his chief appeared more than a little worn, harassed. For the first time since his association with the operative he was aware of an unusual tension—an appearance of strain in the silent figure, which, even as he watched, relaxed slowly in his chair, as if reluctant even to avail himself of this slight respite from his almost furious concentration.

At that moment Mason turned slightly in Trask's direction, opened his lips as if about to speak, but no sound come. From the outer office the staccato clatter of typewriters penetrated through the closed door like the monotonous buzzing of locusts, rising at intervals to the spiteful

drumming of machine-gun fire, as if spelling haste—haste—and more haste—speed—speed—and yet more speed.

They seemed to emphasize the hurrying seconds, lengthening into minutes and hours, while, just ahead, the solution of the problem remained tantalizingly remote, and yet somehow near at hand—if they could but overtake it.

Trask knew better than to disturb his superior at such times, but the sight of the weary figure relaxed momentarily in the chair, in itself (to the assistant) unusual and even disturbing, together with the prompting of a curious, inward urge, brought him to speech.

"Oh, Mr. Mason," he said, indicating the desk before him, "these photographs—I suppose I'd better return them to headquarters?"

"Umm—might as well, Jim," Mason replied heavily. Then: "I hate to say it, but it looks like the ninth inning for us this time, with two out and about a dozen runs to tie."

He laughed wearily, then went on: "There's a vacation coming to you, I believe, Jim. Suppose you take it. Want to quit now?"

Trask interrupted him almost savagely.

"I should say *not!*" he cried. "Not on your tin-type——"

He got no further, as a sudden ejaculation issued from Mason's lips.

"What's that you say, Trask? Fool, dolt, idiot!" almost shouted Mason, and then, at the ludicrous expression of bewildered chagrin on his assistant's face and his halting disclaimer:

"No—no, Jim," he said, with an apologetic laugh, tinged with a curious undercurrent of excitement. "I'm talking to *myself* for once, but," and the words barked out like bullets, "*I've got it!*" he cried. "Get me a telephone Green Book at once, please!"

CHAPTER FOUR

CATCHING the infection of his chief's excitement, the assistant fumbled for a moment at the side of his desk, and then released from its hook a ponderous, green-covered tome which Mason almost snatched from him in his eagerness.

With eyes alight, he pored over this ceaselessly for a full half-hour, but now his concentration seemed to breathe an electric atmosphere of speed plus method. Presently he called for paper and pencil, and began writing down names and addresses.

As he wrote his face seemed to glow as from an inward fire. Little chuckles from time to time escaped him. Finally, when he had written down perhaps two dozen names and addresses, he turned to Trask with a broad smile:

"Now, call a taxi, Jim," he ordered crisply, and at the unspoken question in the other's eyes, smiled again cryptically, as he said:

"All in good time, old man, all in good time. Meanwhile we'll just go for a ride and pay a few calls."

The cab arriving, Mason gave the driver the first address on his list, and after a short run they drew up at what proved to be a fairly pretentious photograph gallery. Whatever Mason had expected to discover or in what manner, his subsequent actions were, at least on the surface, decidedly puzzling—queer, and almost absurd even to Trask, who, in his brief connection with the operative, had learned to expect the unexpected.

"All in good time," Mason had promised, but when they had visited perhaps a dozen photograph galleries, of varying degrees of pretentiousness, at all of which Mason, on one pretext or another, had interviewed the different proprietors, in each instance using a meaningless formula of query as to prices, Trask began to have his doubts.

At several of these places Mason had narrowly escaped an altercation, at once, especially, drawing down upon himself the wrath of the proprietor for what that worthy had been pleased to characterize as "snooping." For, as their search progressed, he had seemed less and less diplomatic in his methods, at times his manner and attitude being almost brusk in its seeming lack of consideration. A word, of course, as to his identity, the presentation of his shield, would have acted as an open sesame, but the investigation brooked not the hazard of any such declaration of his purpose.

Finally they came to a shabby studio over an equally shabby-looking store. Without a word to his assistant, Mason led the way up a narrow stairs, lit by a single, guttering gas-jet, even at mid-day, and opened the door, at which a bell sounded dismally from somewhere in the rear. A man came forward to meet them, and in a rather ungracious manner demanded:

"Well, what do you want?"

Mason observed him narrowly, and for a moment a flicker of interest appeared and died in his glance.

"My friend and I would like to have some tintypes taken," said he coolly. "You're a photographer, aren't you?"

"That's my business," snapped the other, and there could have been no hint of a double meaning in his words, for he called out immediately, his head over his shoulder:

"Jake, oh, Jake!"

At the summons another man appeared out of the shadows at the rear, evidently the photographer, his hands in his pockets He moved lazily, on his smooth-shaven face a half sulky look, as if at an unwarranted disturbance.

At his approach Mason nudged his companion violently, but Trask was aware of nothing out of the ordinary.

The sitting over, the photographer went into

his dark room, and, as Mason afterwards jokingly remarked: "Developments began from that moment," for hardly had the man disappeared from view, the proprietor being at the other end of the fairly long room, than Mason, with a quick, stealthy movement, in two strides was at the door, had flung it wide, and was peering in, Trask at his back.

This is what they beheld in the dull glare from the red light:

The photographer was standing, the tin-types held in his right hand in mid-air, dripping with water from the bath.

For a moment what they could see of his face seemed contorted with passion, or it may have been the sinister effect of the crimson glow, outlining his face and figure in a Rembrandtesque effect of high light and shadow.

"Shut that door, confound you!" he snarled, and Mason hastened to comply, with a muttered apology, but there was a broad grin upon his face as, with Trask, he sauntered leisurely toward the desk at the head of the stairs and awaited the completion of the pictures.

But the man called Jake did not again show himself.

Presently they heard his voice, calling the proprietor, who went to the rear of the room, where Mason and Trask could hear the low hum of muttered conversation.

The man returned rather slowly, Trask thought, and it seemed to him for a moment as if an atmosphere of tension had suddenly enveloped the long room. Unobtrusively, his hand strayed to the flat, black shape of the automatic hung in a sling under his left arm-pit, when from behind him there sounded abruptly a muffled cry.

CHAPTER FIVE

TRASK whirled on his heel, in time to see Mason make one forward step in his direction. Then, from directly behind the detective a door in the wall swung wide, the man Jake, stepping lightly like a great cat, slid into the room. And even as Trask watched, in a hypnosis of fascination, powerless to prevent, the man's hand, holding a blackjack, rose, to sweep downward with crushing force upon Mason's head.

Even while he realized, in one flashing instant, that the man had evidently left the dark room by some secret passage, warned by the proprietor, Trask came into action.

Revolver in hand, he covered the intervening space in a swift, plunging run, holding his fire for fear of hitting his chief. Behind him, as he ran, he heard a hoarse shout:

"The switch, Jake—the switch!"

But he gave it no heed. Every second he expected to hear the crash of a gun in the hands of the fellow at his back, and to feel the searing impact of the slug in his vitals.

The man called Jake had stepped back as Mason had slumped to the floor, and now, in the face of Trask's rush, he side-stepped nimbly, like a boxer, his hand thrust out behind him in a groping motion.

Out of the tail of his eye Trask could see that the proprietor had halted, bending forward as if he waited to see what would happen. Then, even as Trask threw up his gun, his finger on the trigger, came a click—and darkness descended upon the long room like a blanket.

Mason's assistant, thewed like a grizzly, had been trained in a rough school, the school of the survival of the fittest. As a rough-and-tumble fighter he was without a peer; he preferred his fists at any time to a gun; a knife he scorned as the resource of men who lacked stomach for a bruising scrap. Now he backed warily against the wall (he had gotten the direction a split second before the fading of the lights) ready and waiting for whatever should develop.

His heart was heavy within him as he thought of his chief, but his jaw set in the darkness with an iron determination. Let them come on!

And presently they came, and the manner of their coming would have been enough to daunt a spirit less hardy than that of the man who crouched against the wall, waiting—waiting.

A whispering began out of the gloom, thin, insistent, a patter of gutturals, fierce, avid with blood-lust. There began a rustling—nearer it came—a panting—the clink of steel—then a harsh voice, venomous as death itself:

"Death—death to the pig—it is decreed."

There followed a patter of low-pitched voices, rising like the growl of hounds on a fresh scent. A knife thudded into the plaster just behind Trask with a clanging crash.

"We've got y', y' dam' dick!" came a voice, and with the words on the instant Trask found himself the center of a tangle of arms and clutching hands.

With his back to the wall he managed to get in one shot from his revolver; then, clubbing the weapon, used it as in ancient days the cestus-armed boxers of the arena wrought havoc. Right to left, up and down, it smashed home, a terrific instrument of offense before which his assailants gave back, groaning curses in filth of speech untranslatable. But still they came on, rallied—a gun spat orange flame out of the black—a slungshot descended with crushing force on the point of Trask's shoulder.

Twice he went almost to the floor under the weight of many bodies; his head sang, his eyes blurred, fiery wheels spun, whirled; the sounds thinned. He rose to his feet, bear-like, and with a sudden accession of strength seized the smallest one of his attackers, whirled him aloft.

Armed with this human club, for a moment he cleared a space before him. He could see nothing, but at every whirl of that heavy body men gave back. Grasping it by the heels, Trask

used it like a flail, and, like the chaff they were, his attackers broke and ran.

But it could not endure very long. Even Trask's tremendous strength was beginning to wane, his breath came sobbingly in his throat. Bruised, battered, spent, he sank to one knee as the human tide rolled over him like a flood. Something snapped in his brain. Then he was sliding down a long hill—on and down—to the deep oblivion of unconsciousness.

CHAPTER SIX

TRASK came to himself with a splitting head and a shoulder which ached and throbbed powerfully where it had been struck by the blackjack.

He opened his eyes with an effort, but they met nothing but a dead blackness, unrelieved. When he tried to move he found that he was swathed from neck to heel in a continuous lashing of rope.

Straining his eyes in the dense darkness, he could see nothing, but presently to his ears there came the slow "drip-drip" of liquid upon stone. The air was damp and chill, musty, with a tomb-like savor, and all about him in the blackness there sounded the squeal and scurry of rats.

Abruptly there came a sound which chilled his blood, then sent a surge of thankfulness against his heart. The thin whisper reached him, as it seemed, from leagues of distance:

"Jim—Jim! Are you there?"

Trask found voice in an explosive, heartfelt.

"Thank God! Chief, I thought—I was certain you were done—killed. How—how're you makin' it?"

"The same as you, I reckon, Jim—pretty much the worse for wear," came the whispered answer. "Know where we are?"

"Cellar—must be," replied Trask. "But where—I've no idea."

"Well, we're alive, and that's something," returned Mason cheerfully. "Why, I just can't say. These birds usually do a killing first, and think about it afterwards—maybe. Some one must have tipped our hand to them. They're the ones we're after, all right. Perhaps they became suspicious when I——"

He broke off short with a warning hiss as somewhere in the distance a door slammed shut with a muffled clang. Steps sounded—careful footfalls—the pad-pad of sandaled feet.

The thought rose in Trask's mind that this was the explanation: Their captors had merely postponed the hour of their quietus, and now, here in the darkness and silence of this dripping cellar, there came one who would be their executioner.

This was to be their tomb then. Here they would rot; or, as in many another case, following a swift knife-thrust, or the crushing impact of a "persuader," two more would be added to the grim list of the missing.

Trask's muscles swelled against his bonds as the footfalls drew nearer—one man, and one only, he was certain. But then one would be more than enough for the grim business of dispatching two helpless prisoners.

But the man would reach Mason first.

Trask strained his ears in the effort at listening. The stealthy steps—slap—slap—shuffle—slap—abruptly ceased. There came a fumbling rustle as if in the smothering darkness the murderer reached out to mark his victim.

To Trask, iron-nerved, practical, unimaginative, after a fashion, as he was, each second was a long-drawn eternity of torture. There was something unreal about it, nightmarish. And yet he knew but too well that if it was a dream, it was a dream from which they would presently awake—in Eternity.

The tension had risen almost to a physical pain when out of the darkness there came an abrupt, choking gasp—a death-cry like a sound of doom. Then, even as Trask's blood froze with the horror of it, he heard a tense whisper:

"Jim!"

That was the miracle. Then, after a moment, again:

"Jim—just—a—minute."

A match sputtered, cautiously, and in its brief flame Trask beheld the figure of his superior, erect, unfettered, at his feet in a shapeless bundle that had been a man.

The match winked out, and in a moment Mason was slashing with quick knife-strokes at Trask's bonds. As he worked he panted in quick whispers:

"No time to lose! They tied me tight, but they overlooked one thing—my chest expansion. You know the trick—makes quite a bit of slack—so when this strong-arm tackled me I was ready for him."

In a moment Trask was free. He stood easing his cramped muscles; then the two men, Mason leading, made their cautious way along the wall.

Reaching a turn, again the careful scratching of a man revealed a heavy iron door. This, however, gave readily under Mason's hand; they found themselves in what was evidently the cellar of a warehouse, at the far end of which there shone a faint, paley glimmer.

Tracing this to its source, they found a grimy door, glass-paned, opening on an alley. Above them was the vault of the night sky, and in the near distance the clock tower of a famous building registered eleven-thirty.

At the end of the alley Mason looked at the street number.

"Well, by ——!" he exclaimed. "Who'd have thought it—so near and yet so far——"

He broke off to wig-wag vigorously to the driver of an owl taxi which that moment drove

around the corner. The machine slowed, swung over to the curb.

"Come on now, Jim; we've only one more place to go!" cried Mason, and with the words crowded his companion into the vehicle and piled in after him, flinging over his shoulder the pregnant words:

"Police Headquarters—and drive like the devil!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

AS the motor roared its staccato clamor, then settled into a steady beat of increasing speed, Mason outlined swiftly for his assistant's benefit certain links of the chain which even now, despite the recent desperate efforts of the "queer-shovers," was tightening inexorably about their quarry.

"Didn't mean to keep you in the *dark* altogether, Jim," he laughed. "I just wanted to be sure of certain *developments*—that's all."

There was a bubbling quality in his speech, despite the experiences which he had undergone, as if he kept under with difficulty his eager, pent-up laughter.

"And now"—he thrust a hand into his pocket and produced an envelope—"this is all I needed to round out the plot. They copped my "galleries," but I don't need 'em with this."

Trask took it, gazed at the name and address, the latter a number on West 29th Street, then returned it, as his lips puckered in a silent whistle.

"Why, that's—that's the——"

"The Big Gun," completed Mason. "Of course, it's one of his aliases. And the house—well, it isn't very far from a certain alley we know of. I knew him all right, even without his beard, but for a while I was stymied, as our golfing friends have it, without the address of his hang-out, and —and—one other little bit of evidence, or lack of it."

"But how—where——?" began Trask.

"Oh, that was easy enough," replied Mason. "I could have gotten the info through legitimate means—his address, that is—but that would have taken time, so, on a chance, I frisked him for it when he was taking your picture. It was sticking out of his pocket, and when I saw the name I knew it was the right address. If I do say it myself, I'd have made a first-class dip for a swell mob, Jim, and that's a fact."

That night Mason and his assistant, reinforced by a squad of the local police, watched the 29th Street house until eleven o'clock. It was an old, faded brick structure, used apparently as a cheap rooming-house.

In this dim backwater of the city's traffic was silence, save for the infrequent footsteps of an occasional passerby and the rumble of the "L," softened by distance to a faint shadow of clamor.

At a signal the Secret Service man ascended the rickety steps, and addressed himself to the bell-pull. There followed a discordant jangle out of the bowels of the ancient structure, and after an interval of perhaps a minute the door was opened by a feminine nondescript who immediately filled the air with outraged complainings as Mason, followed by Trask and the police, burst in at the threshold like a flood, and, like an upended avalanche, boiled up the stairway to a room on the second floor, burst through the door in strides, as it were, and at a crisp command from Mason, drew and covered two men at work under a flaring gas-jet.

A half-dozen others, one with the slant eyes of a Chinaman, they herded against the wall.

One of the two, whom Trask recognized as the photographer who had taken their pictures, hurriedly slipped some papers into his pocket, almost with the same motion producing an automatic, one shot from which crashed into the ceiling before he was overpowered by two of the policemen.

The second man, the erstwhile proprietor of the gallery, had been working at a printing press set against the wall. Now, with a gesture of resignation, he turned to the officers as he said, sullenly, yet with a trace of mystification in his tone:

"Well, y' got us, all right, all right, but I'm damned 'f I c'n figure how y' pulled it."

He seemed like a man in a daze, his face working, his eyes staring and sullen, as he faced his captors. Then he saw Mason.

For a moment he stared like a man who sees a ghost; then, his face working like a man in a fit, he backed against the wall, his sullenness dissolving in panic and terror.

"It's him!" he shouted. "It's him! God, take him away!"

Raving, he was taken outward to the wagon.

When the rooms had been cleared, search of the premises resulted in sufficient evidence to send the counterfeiters to a federal prison, aside from the charges of assault and attempted murder. And that they would have stopped at nothing to achieve their ends both Trask and Mason bore eloquent witness.

The detectives found a photographic kit and a set of color pencils. The counterfeits had not been struck off plates, but simply photographed on a fine quality of bond paper, which had been sensitized for the purpose. The protective threads were imitated with colored pencils.

Altogether they were the finest counterfeits that had made their appearance in a very long time; in fact, it took an expert to discover that they were not genuine notes.

Seated in Mason's office over a midnight supper of beer and sandwiches, Trask gazed somewhat impatiently at his superior, as if he felt that the

latter had been overdoing his part a trifle. Mason understood this quite well, but perhaps his one weakness was a slight leaning toward the theatrical—the dramatic.

"Well, old man," said he, bending forward in his chair, "there was just one thing about this case—or, rather, two things—deduction and the sense of smell. You might say it was an adaptation of the old nursery rhyme 'Fee—fi—fo—fum!' Only in this case it was something less gory."

He paused a moment, then went on:

"What my olfactory sense perceived"—smiling at the stilted phrase—"what I noticed when I sniffed at that old leather wallet in Silsbee's restaurant was *the odor of ether!*"

"Ether?" queried Trask. "But what has that to do——?"

"Everything," pursued Mason. "The second I sniffed that curious odor I knew I was on the right scent, with a vengeance." He smiled. "It was the right dope, sure enough, but after a while I played it the wrong way. That's where you come in, Jim."

He beamed upon Trask.

"Well, you see, Jim, it was the dope clue that sent you out after what I was certain were two 'burnees' who played the ether deck; they're not so rare as you might think, although most addicts are 'snow-birds'—'cokies'—eaters of heroin—as you know. That's what threw me off. The smell was there, all right, but, as I say, I followed the wrong scent for a while."

"But——" began Trask.

"It was that remark of yours about 'tin-types' that set me right. It immediately occurred to me that in this case it was the curious smell that hovers about photographic studios, especially where they make these abominations. It comes, as you no doubt know, from a solution of gun-cotton and ether used in photography. The next step was the directory. I secured the addresses of as many photographers as I was reasonably certain were none too prominent, and at that it was a job of some magnitude, as you'll remember."

You recall the man with the Van Dyke beard, with the thumb of his right hand missing. Well, I was in search of that thumbless hand, of course, and you know now where I secured the results."

"The dark room!" exploded Trask. "Of course——"

"Certainly. The photo business was just a blind. I was reasonably sure of them from *their* photographs, but I wanted corroboration. When I looked into that dark room and saw the photographer holding up the tin-type I saw immediately that his right hand was minus a thumb!"

Mason paused.

"*Quod erat demonstrandum!*" pronounced the assistant with a grin.

U. S. S. LEXINGTON TO BE THE LARGEST WARSHIP IN THE WORLD

THE keel of the world's biggest warship will be laid down at Quincy, Mass., within six months. The battle-cruiser Lexington, combining in a degree unequaled by any ship of war now built or building, the qualities of powerful armament and high speed, has taken form in drawings and awaits the arrival of materials to be advanced from the hands of the architect to those of the builder. By fall, it is estimated, the prospective queen of the United States navy will become a ship under construction instead of an ambitious plan.

The Lexington is the name ship of a class of battle-cruisers which will give Uncle Sam within four years a fleet of six big-gun fighting ships unmatched by anything then afloat. Her sister ships, the Constellation, Saratoga, Ranger, Constitution and United States, are also under contract. They bring names out of the old navy with which to develop for the first new capital vessels of the post-war fleet a traditional background for fresh exploits.

With the others of its class the Lexington will be a whale of a ship. It will displace 43,200 tons and will have the power of 180,000 horses, as measured in mechanical terms. Its length of 874 feet is within 46 feet of the length of the Leviathan, monster passenger liner. The 101.4 feet of width of the Lexington will make that floating gun platform broader than any passenger ship.

The Lexington, which is to be equipped with electric drive, will attain a speed of 35 knots. This cruiser speed, higher than that of many destroyers, is the object of much of the designing that entered into the creation of the Lexington class. Armor will be sacrificed to make possible the 35-knot speed—the main belt being only five inches thick at its maximum, as compared with the 12-inch steel belt on most battleships, but the armament will be of tremendous power. The Lexington thus will have not only the strategic advantage of high speed but will be able to fire a heavier charge over a greater distance than any other battleship for which the plans are known.

The Lexington in action will speak with a voice of 16-inch guns, of which she will have eight. The navies of Great Britain, France and Italy contain no gun greater than fifteen inches, and that of Japan includes 16-inch guns only on battleships of 24-knot speed, which are now under construction. Unlike the dreadnought class's reliance on big guns exclusively, the Lexington will carry sixteen 6-inch guns as a secondary armament.

The Marvin Case

By P. HILAND

[The case that follows is taken at random from many in my notebook describing the remarkable achievements of my friend, Professor Onerly. Still in his early forties, a big, keen, reserved man but with a heart as tender as a woman's, as many of his exploits show, he easily stands in the front rank of his profession—an expert in scientific criminal investigation.]

"YOUR friend did not commit suicide, Lawyer Bendall; neither did he die from the effects of a bullet fired from that pistol, as Doctor Lee surmised! His death was caused by a small hatpin driven into the spine. The deed was committed by a woman, who was insane at the time, and who, if my theory is correct, is now dead!"

As Professor Onerly finished Frank Bendall sat staring at him too amazed to utter a word, and, I thought, with rather a queer expression upon his face—half fear, or something that I failed to analyze. As for myself, I felt no surprise, in a way, for I was beginning to grow accustomed to the wonderful achievements of this remarkable man. But I did marvel at the rapid deductions by my friend. In my judgment, the time consumed on the case was, perhaps, a trifle over three hours. And about half of this time had been taken up in the small study, where the body of the supposed suicide, Attorney Marvin, still remained, nearly bolt upright in his chair.

While the balance Onerly utilized in questioning the servants and by speeding away in a high-power car ordered from a nearby garage. Where, and for what purpose, I had yet to learn.

However, as Bendall still remained silent, and Onerly took out his notebook, I rapidly revolved the case in my mind.

I wished to see if I could find a base or recall any points from which this expert in crime detection had started his extraordinary theories.

I could remember only one or two circumstances while in the study that, doubtless, led to the professor's deductions, but in what manner I failed to conceive. One was a question put to Bendall inquiring if there was not a lamp usually sitting on top of the case near the window. Another that Marvin was addicted to the use of drugs, and that a bottle of laudanum was missing.

My friend Onerly was using his small, powerful glass at the time, I recalled, going over the room carefully, while he voiced a query every now and then. A close examination of the wound where the bullet had entered the right temple of the dead man was made by Onerly, and he also picked up the revolver from the floor, held it to his nose for a moment and replaced it again.

It was always the little things that counted with Onerly. He had a way of putting them together until they formed a chain of evidence that bordered on the incredible.

"But, why, I don't see how——" It was Bendall speaking, and Onerly cut him short in his usual way.

"Wait; all in good time, Mr. Bendall. My statements, no doubt, seem to you as out of the usual order. But, as a man of law, you will easily follow me, for this case is as simple as 'two plus two.' With your assistance, we will run over my notes, which, I trust, will prove my deductions to be correct."

We were seated in the library of the Marvin home, with the professor near the table, on which he now placed some leaves taken from his notebook, also a woman's white handkerchief, a partly burned match, a bunch of keys and a cork-stopper to a small bottle, one I felt he had taken from the desk in the study.

"Now we will take up the case from the beginning," the professor resumed. "Your most intimate friend, Attorney Marvin, is discovered by the servant, dead in his chair, in the study, which the same servitor saw him enter the night before as usual.

"Therefore, you and the family doctor are sent for, and the latter purports it a case of suicide.

"Now, to digress a bit, it appears that my entrance to this case was brought about by a request made by Marvin some forty-eight hours previous to the crime committed in the study.

"It was made to you in private, you state, and entreated you to employ me by all means if anything should happen.

"Now this singular request simply caused you some uneasiness, while the information imparted to me opened up a starting point—something to build on, as it were. First, it follows that your friend harbored a presentiment that danger was lurking near—he feared something. Second, that he knew well my reputation—that I never favor newspaper notoriety—never bare a family skeleton to the public, unless absolutely necessary! And the last is what he feared above everything." Here the professor glanced at his watch, then went on:

"As we can find no apparent reason why he should wish to step out of this life, for he enjoyed good health, was well-to-do, and in the prime of life, with nothing to tempt him to execute an act of this nature, we must evolve a theory as follows:

"Contrary to the words of the doctor, it is simply a case of suicide, on the surface; for, as we go a bit deeper, under the 'cover,' so to speak,

we find that a crime has been committed, with all the acute cunning that always accompanies the terrible affliction termed insanity!

"When I entered the room yonder"—and the professor pointed to a door leading from the library to the study—"I saw many things that escaped the practiced eyes of the doctor. He, like many others in his profession, let his judgment go awry by force of impressions gathered on the instant.

"For instance, if he had only looked at the wound made by the bullet through a glass he would have discovered that the little piece of lead entered Marvin's head after life had become extinct!"

"And he was shot after death had occurred from some other cause?" exclaimed Bendall in great astonishment. "Then—that—the hatpin—Great heavens! And a woman did this?" Bendall was laboring under strong excitement, that was certain.

"Yes. The instrument of death was sent into his neck at least three hours previous to the wound caused by the bullet, simply to make it appear a case of suicide; or, from the fancies racing in a demented brain!" returned the professor, and continued:

"We will now return to the afternoon and evening preceding the death of your friend," Onerly went on, his keen glance first bent upon his notes, then turned to the face of the other.

"We find from the results gained from my questions put to the servants that a lady was the only visitor to this house, that called in the late afternoon. She was heavily veiled, and the servant, Thomas, did not recognize her. When told that Mr. Marvin was out, she said she had an appointment with him, and would await his return. Consequently, Thomas had admitted her and left the lady in the reception-room, then went about his duties as usual.

"Shortly after this he had glanced into the room, only to find it vacant, supposing, of course, that the lady had grown tired of waiting the attorney's return and left the house.

"This incident he had entirely forgotten until I caused him to recall it. He states she was of slight build, her weight under a hundred, he should have judged, and that the pallor of her face plainly showed through the heavy veil. Now, Thomas, in the vocation he follows, is naturally observing, and one can rely upon his judgment. So it brings another angle into the case.

"The weapon that caused the death of Marvin was driven home with considerable force, and it is evident that the blow to accomplish this could never have been delivered by the hand of this delicate woman, unless under some stress of mind, brought on by extreme anger or, what is more terrible, the madness of the incurable!"

"My God! You don't mean—you can't infer she did this awful thing?" burst out Bendall, as he held hard to the arms of his chair.

The professor now paused for a moment, his eyes meeting mine for a second, and I gained instantly from that look that a climax of some sort was near. I didn't exactly understand the expression on the face of Bendall, and it seemed to me as though his actions denoted fear, or he dreaded to have Onerly go on.

I had closely followed every word uttered by my friend, trying at times to pierce the haze of mystery that hovered over and around Marvin's death. But to no purpose. As Onerly advanced the workings of that marvelous mind it became too profound for me to follow. Now again he started in, ignoring entirely the questions put by the lawyer:

"We will follow this woman from the time she was last seen in the reception-room," went on the professor, consulting his notes and speaking in his deep, musical voice. "The door of the room was doubtless left ajar, or wide open, and when Thomas was not in sight this woman stole out into the hall and entered the library, where we now are.

"It was evident that she had been here before, was well acquainted with the location of all the rooms, as I shall soon make clear. Here, behind the curtain at the end of the bookcase," and he indicated to where the extension stood, "she remained until Marvin entered his study some two hours later. You observe," and Onerly rose and advanced to the case in question, "that this curtain covers a space left vacant for another set of shelves to fit in here, which your friend probably intended to order at some future time. As you see, there is ample room for a person to hide, and a very simple matter to enter the study by this door, which I tried and found to open without a sound on its well-oiled hinges.

"Also I found this," he continued as he seated himself and held up the handkerchief taken from the other articles on the table, "lying on the floor behind the curtains, where it was accidently dropped. This fabric is well-scented with a perfume—a French make—which I know well, and the handle of that revolver, now resting on the floor in the study, smells strongly of this same deep, violet aroma.

"While this," he went on slowly, taking up a small, flat piece of paper tied with silk thread, "contains two single strands of hair that evidently came from the head of a woman. The use of my glass deciphers them as being slightly streaked with gray and undoubtedly from the same head. One of them was near the handkerchief behind the curtain, and the other I discovered back of the chair occupied by the late Mr. Marvin."

I could have heard a pin drop in that room, so tense was the silence as the professor paused for a moment to consult his notes.

Attorney Bendall's self-possession, gained through ten years of practice as a criminal lawyer, seemed to be on the verge of deserting him

entirely. Certainly the recital, bit by bit, slowly but surely leading up and to the committal of the crime, appeared to effect him in no small degree.

Professor Onerly now leaned back from the table and with folded arms again continued:

"It is well, I believe, to drop this thread for a time while we search for a motive," the expert remarked; "for no crime is ever committed without a motive. And to find one in this case we shall go back over a period of three years. On the eighth of June of that year your friend Marvin was married. And a year later, plus two days, his young wife passed away, leaving him nearly a wreck from the blow of her demise. This, without doubt, as you say, was the sole cause of his resorting to a drug, in the form of laudanum, which contains opium, as we all know.

"As an intimate friend, perhaps you know that about this time—or, to be more exact, only a few days previous to his marriage—a girl came to this house and was admitted by some one—who, it doesn't matter—and she remained in this house until after the wedding.

"She occupied that room upstairs which, you remember, the housekeeper told me, had not been opened now for nearly three years. This girl came from N——p, a nearby town, and was an old flame of Marvin's, even after he became engaged to the woman he married. To the best of my knowledge, the presence of the young lady in this home was known only to two persons—Marvin and the housekeeper.

"However, it was Marvin's intention to get her away before the wedding, but fate was against him.

"She was taken ill suddenly, and the result was a child born out of wedlock, with the mother too ill to be moved.

"Marvin concealed his coming marriage from her, but it appears that in some inconceivable way the fact become known to her during her illness. Consequently, to cut a long story short, her love for Marvin was so strong that the discovery of his duplicity nearly killed her. And far better if it had, for soon the death of the child followed, and the mother's reason was lost forever!"

The professor again consulted his notes, and as Bendall made no move to speak went on:

"The housekeeper, unknown to herself, in answer to some of my questions, gave me the first clue. It was then very simple to find and interview the physician, but not so easy to obtain the facts I desired; only the assurance that nothing on my part would ever be given out to blot the family name won the confidence of the doctor.

"From his place I went direct to the sexton who received the *little box* brought by Mr. Marvin —and yourself!" The last was directed straight to Bendall, and the shot told.

"Yes; you're quite correct," he slowly replied. "I did it to help a friend, who was almost distracted at the time. But I never supposed that it would ever come to light.

"It is truly astounding to me how you ever uncovered this mystery!" and he sighed heavily, while it appeared that Marvin had been a dear friend indeed.

"From the sexton," Onerly then continued, "guided by the information gained, I went at once to the nearest asylum, about twelve miles out, where, as I surmised, I found a patient had escaped—and that the inmate was a woman! The doctor in charge told me she was allowed to leave her room at times, as her health was fast failing and she was violent only by spells.

"A search of her room revealed, jotted down here and there on the covers of some books and magazines, much of the story I have related, when put together piece by piece.

"Her escape was aided by a big touring car sitting in the yard, in which reposed a complete outfit for a woman, brought by the owners, who intended taking away one of the patients.

"She had taken these clothes, hat and all, and made her escape. I at once called up the parties on the 'phone, to bear out my theory of the perfume. It was the same as hovers around the pistol and the handkerchief."

"And she—what became of—the woman?—oh, you said that she was dead! What—how——" Here Bendall came to a halt. He seemed to lose, for the moment, the control of his naturally intuitive mind.

"We are coming to that now," answered Onerly with that grim smile of his. "When Miss Barlow—that was her name—entered the study from this room Marvin's back was toward the door, if you noticed. Whether the sight of him caused the sudden change, or she was already in a frenzy, will never be known. But, after driving the pin into his back, she apparently recovered in a way, for her next act plainly shows the cool deliberation of the cautious mind. And this was in the lighting of the small lamp that stood on the gun-case by the window, as a ring of dust and a half-burned match testified.

"Also her affliction was taking a turn that allowed her mother-love to assert itself in a small way. This is evident from the fact that she, after lighting the lamp, which I deduct followed the death-stab administered to Marvin, was to search for the key to that room upstairs, prompted by some morbid fancy of the past.

"This bunch of keys I found on the desk, and one loose from the ring, apparently pushed off hurriedly in trying to get the right one," the professor finished, holding up the keys.

"In her search for the key," he went on slowly, "Miss Barlow came upon the pistol and the laudanum, and some insane fancy tempted her to take them with her when she left the room the first time."

"Then she returned—came again to the study after committing the deed?" exclaimed Bendall.

"Yes, some three hours later. The dust had settled quite a bit around the marks left by her first visit to the room upstairs."

This was news to me, for, although I was aware that my friend had made a search on the upper floor, he had failed to enlighten me as to his discoveries, if any.

"My investigations in the hall upstairs," remarked Onerly as he replaced the notebook in his pocket, "while of short order, disclosed and clinched one or two important links in the case. The room in question, which has been closed now for about three years, is the last one to open off the hall on that side.

"From the words of the housekeeper, I infer that this side of the house has not been used in that period of time, and was shunned by her as well as by Marvin, and has consequently received but scant attention for that reason.

"Dust is a quick accumulator, and a flashlight and the glass did the rest. First, the imprint of the revolver and bottle where they rested on the carpet at the right of the door, where she had placed them in order to give her a free hand in unlocking the same. Again, in her second visit to the room she had nearly obliterated the marks by the dust carried along from the swing of her skirt.

"Furthermore, if she had not carried the pistol around with her, the perfume would not have been so easily detected upon the weapon. While only the unaccountable impressions that run in a demented and utterly deranged mind can hold her responsible for the return to the study, and fire that shot at the head of the man she had once loved, who was already dead, executed by her hand. And she was well aware that the report could not be heard from the servants' quarters, too. Then again, the insane impulse that swayed her to obtain possession of both the poison and pistol bespoke suicidal intentions. And you stated, I believe, Mr. Bendall, that the bottle contained a full four ounces, as you knew his habit of always keeping a full bottle on hand. Enough poison to kill a horse," he added, half to himself.

"Well, gentlemen"—the words of the professor came snappy as he rose from the table—"we'll now lift the curtain from the last scene of this tragedy, and then my work on the case is done. You may hush up the matter; let it go as a suicide; Marvin paid well for the keeping of the poor woman; do as you think best. We shall now enter the room upstairs. The door is locked from the inside, and I detected the faint odor of the drug through the keyhole, as the room is tightly closed."

With a pair of nippers Onerly turned the key in the lock, and we stepped into the room. Dust was everywhere. The professor strode to the window and flooded the interior with light, then pulled aside the curtains that screened a costly brass bed that had at one time harmonized with the appropriate furnishings of the room, but now the large posts were a bit discolored and the white coverlets slightly yellow from disuse.

And across the bed, amid the dusty surroundings, lay the form of a woman; her lips parted in a smile—a smile that seemed to brighten up the pale, wan face, as though she was sleeping peacefully. And so she was! Near her hand, from which it had dropped, lay the empty bottle, labeled—Poison!

ABOUT ELECTRIC FISH

CERTAIN fishes exhibit peculiar electrical phenomena of muscles, nerves and heart, which have given them the name of electric fishes.

There are in all about fifty species of these fishes, but the electrical properties of only five or six have been studied in detail. The best known are various species of torpedo, belonging to the skate family found in the Mediterranean and Adriatic seas; the gymnotus, an eel found in the region of the Orinoco in South America; the malapterurus, the thrash or thunderer fish, of the Arabs, a native of the Nile, the Niger, Senegal and other African rivers, and various species of skate found in the seas around Great Britain.

The electrical fishes do not belong to any one class or group—some are found in fresh water, while others inhabit the sea. They possess two distinct types of electrical organs. One closely relates in structure to muscle, as found in the torpedo, gymnotus and skate, while the other presents more of the characters of the structure of the secreting gland as illustrated by the electric organ of the thunderer fish. Both types are built upon a vast number of microscopical elements, each of which is supplied with a nerve fibre.

These nerve fibres come from large nerves that originate in the nerve centers, brain or spinal cord, and in these centers are found special large nerve cells, with which the nerve fibres of the electric organs are connected and from which they spring. Yet the electricity is not generated in the electric centers and conveyed by the electric nerves to the electric organ itself. It is only produced, however, so as to give a shock when set in action by nervous impulses transmitted to it from the electric centers by the electric nerves.

There are few departments of physiological science in which can be found a more striking example of organic adaptiveness than in the construction of the electric fishes. In these animals there are specialized organs for the production of electricity on an economical basis for surpassing anything yet contrived by man. The organs are either modified muscles or modified glands, structures which in all animals manifest electrical properties.

The Crystal Locket

By CHARLES M. ROCKWELL

CHAPTER I.

THE curious case I am about to present before my readers resulted in unraveling a death mystery which had baffled half the detectives and doctors of the city some time before.

The person, the cause of whose singular and sudden demise had never been satisfactorily explained, was a certain Widow Mowbray—a middle-aged and plain-looking woman of miserly habits, and who was supposed to have accumulated a large amount of savings.

She had lived alone in a small hired house, surrounded by vacant lots, and situated on the outskirts of the city.

The house was furnished in comparative comfort, however; and she had visitors frequently, as she was closely related to several substantial old families with whom she had always maintained friendly intercourse.

She had always been a robust and vigorous woman, and when she was discovered one morning sitting cold and dead in the old-fashioned wooden rocker of her little kitchen there were not a few who suspected that some foul play had been enacted.

But the suspicions, and the subsequent investigations, ended in nothing.

The post mortem examination disclosed no signs of violence and no trace of poison.

The detectives unearth no clue to either enemies or to any one who would be especially benefited by her death.

If she had hoarded wealth, its place of deposit or concealment was not detected.

If a robbery had been attempted, then the robbers had cleverly covered their every track; moreover, there was but one article missing, and that article was a large locket, which the dead woman had in life always worn suspended by a thick black silk cord about her neck.

The locket was supposed to contain only the miniature of her husband, of whom she had been bereaved many years before.

As no hoardings were brought to light, and as her relatives were inclined to doubt the theory of foul play, there was no money in the case, and it was ultimately dropped.

Among them who were more nearly related to the dead woman, or more closely associated with her, were her step-son, a favorite nephew, and a young woman who was regarded as a confidential friend.

The first was a handsome man of something more than thirty, of a sinewy and singularly symmetrical frame, regular features, rich, olive skin and piercing dark eyes, and of a fascination of speech and bearing which it would be difficult to describe.

Mort Mowbray had received a medical education, but had never settled down to practice. He had inherited a splendid fortune, which he chose to spend in travel and adventure.

He had been in nearly every quarter of the globe, and had passed several years in India and Persia, from which countries he had but recently returned.

The second—the widow's favorite nephew—was a youth of not more than nineteen. I have rarely met a more manly-looking young fellow than was Walter Wayne.

He was rather above the medium height, finely proportioned, with the muscles of an athlete. His fair, beardless cheeks showed the rosy hue of perfect health; his auburn hair curled crisply away from an intellectual forehead; his eyes were blue and frank.

He had been orphaned when a mere child; he had no fortune whatever, and his education had been almost self-acquired, and at the time I mention he held a rather responsible position in a real estate office, and had every prospect of a speedy promotion.

The third—Mira Mervin, the dead woman's confidential friend—was a stylish young lady of a bold and dashing type of beauty—a magnificent blonde, with eyes as dark as night.

She was supposed to be the possessor of an independent income, and she resided in a fashionable and elegantly equipped private boarding-house.

It was young Walter Wayne who recalled my passing interest in the mysterious death of the Widow Mowbray.

Some six months had elapsed since that event, when the young fellow presented himself one afternoon in my office.

His fine frank face was white with excitement as he explained his errand.

"You remember my expressing the opinion that my aunt's death was not due to natural causes?" he began.

I answered that I had not forgotten.

"Something has occurred to strengthen that opinion. I am sorry now I did not tell you everything in the beginning."

"What is the nature of the information which you withheld?"

The young fellow drew a carefully secured package from one of his pockets, removed the wrappings from some gleaming article, and then placed on my desk before me *the missing locket.*

It was the oddest specimen of that particular sort of ornament which I had ever beheld.

It was the size in diameter of an old style "turnip" watch. One side was of flat, plain, solid gold; the other side was convex or bulging, and was sheathed in this green crystal—a peculiar substance, having the rich hue of solid emerald, but showing grooves and ridges of the most delicate workmanship over its gleaming transparency.

It was without the ordinary spring; in fact, as I examined it I jumped to the correct conclusion that the method of opening it was meant to be a secret, except to the initiated.

"How did you get it?" was my query.

"I found it in the grass just outside the kitchen door, not an hour after my aunt was discovered dead in her chair."

"Why did you keep back such an item of evidence?"

"No one thought as I did. Whoever dropped that locket is guilty of my aunt's death. I had a quiet plan of my own to detect and bring to justice the guilty party."

"I fail to see the point."

"I believe the locket contains some papers stating the disposition of her property and where that property is concealed. Whoever stole the locket from her neck evidently had the same belief."

"I don't quite follow you."

The young fellow's pale cheeks reddened with impatience.

"If the locket contains what I believe it does, would not the person who stole it and lost it exhaust every effort, however desperate, to find it again?"

"Well?"

"My plan was to have a duplicate made, and to display that duplicate as ostentatiously as possible. In the meantime I should be ready to nab any one who attempted to take it from me, knowing that in so doing I should capture a villain."

I was beginning to feel an interest in the case and also a profound admiration for the astuteness of young Walter Wayne.

"A jeweler would soon open this odd ornament and settle all doubts as to its contents," I said.

"I have no doubts; and I do not care to have it opened until my own honesty in the matter and until the designs of my aunt's destroyer is proven beyond dispute."

"What steps have you taken toward identifying her destroyer?"

"I have the duplicate made. For an instant I transferred it to the keeping of others, and in that instant it disappeared."

Walter's look of disgust at his want of caution was so intense and solemn that I could not restrain a smile.

But when I had heard his story of the duplicate's disappearance I saw at once the significance of the incident.

It seemed that the duplicate had been boldly stolen from the house where he lodged during his absence at the real estate office.

There was a little child in the family where he lodged to whom he was much attached.

The child was ailing, and to please the little thing he had placed the glittering ornament about her neck.

Some time during the day a young woman had engaged a room in the house, and an hour or so later had made some trivial errand into the apartment where the child was lying in her grandmother's arms.

As the young woman noticed the duplicate locket glittering on the child's breast she sprang forward in wild agitation.

"It is mine! I demand it this instant. If you refuse I will call an officer," she cried, in a fierce, suppressed tone, as she pointed menacingly at the ornament.

The old grand-dame was too startled to make any resistance, and the next second the young woman had torn the duplicate from the child's neck and disappeared.

"When she discovers it is only a cheap imitation of gilt and glass she will be the maddest young woman in the city," the young fellow said, with a sudden boyish laugh.

"But have you considered what may happen to you, young man?"

His frank face paled slightly, but he did not look uneasy.

"Have you considered that this as yet unknown woman may institute measures to force the genuine locket from you? That she may charge you with robbery, and causing your Aunt Mowbray's death?"

"We must check-mate that game; the young woman must be traced and shadowed."

"Do you suspect who she is?"

"The description is that of Mira Mervin—a stylish blonde with eyes like midnight. She gave a different name—most likely an assumed one—when she engaged the room at the lodging-house. Of course she will never show herself there again."

"You think she only hired the furnished room with the design of getting the crystal locket?"

"I am convinced that was her scheme."

"You are convinced also that your Aunt Mowbray had an enormous amount of savings secreted somewhere, and that the locket holds directions where the money may be found?"

"I am as sure of it as I am that I am standing here."

He explained his reasons for his belief; he repeated various conversations he had held with his aunt, and the significant hints she had thrown out from time to time, and I finally agreed to take hold of the curious case.

There was no doubt that the person who had stolen the duplicate would resort to desperate measures to secure the dead woman's hidden savings.

It occurred to me that failing to find explicit directions in the spurious locket, an attempt might be made to search the house which the widow had occupied—that the search would be made secretly and immediately.

The idea was worth testing anyway.

And so after reconoitering for an hour or so in the vicinity of the fashionable boarding-house where Miss Mervin resided, I started for the outskirts of the city.

I had already satisfied myself that Mira Mervin was the young woman who had stolen the duplicate; in fact I had stumbled upon the very cabman who had driven her to the lodging-house, and the man had recognized her beyond a doubt.

She had also engaged the cabman for the same evening.

"It's somewhere nigh the limits she's going, I reckon; I have took her that way afore, a spell back maybe, but I remember well enough," the man said.

I had extracted the information without arousing the man's curiosity, and I could scarcely suppress a smile of satisfaction as I left him.

I had scored a point at the first move, and I was certain I had struck the trail.

It was just dark when I reached the dead woman's former dwelling.

The house had not been let since the death of its late tenant, and dreary enough it looked in the cloudy starlight with its low, gable roof and narrow, boarded windows looming above the tall weeds of the neglected garden.

The wooden gate was padlocked, and after listening for a moment I made a detour of the strong board fence which inclosed the lot.

I had made nearly the entire circuit, when I detected a place in the shelter of a thick clump of bushes where a board had been loosened and lowered, leaving an aperture sufficient for easy admission into the garden.

I struck a match, and even in that brief, flickering light I saw the passage had been recently and often used.

The weeds were slightly trodden down, and there were marks as if the board had been frequently let down and adjusted into place again, as the occasion required.

"The search for the hidden money has been in progress for months," I thought at once.

And I was right, as subsequent developments proved.

I stepped noiselessly through the aperture and started cautiously toward the house.

The building seemed as dark and silent as a tomb.

But as I neared a rear door I saw that it was slightly ajar, and at the moment I heard the blood-curdling shriek of a woman.

The shriek seemed to issue from the depths of the earth beneath the building.

Without pausing to reflect I sprang through the open door, and dashed in the direction of a dim ray of light which I noticed gleaming faintly up the cellar stairs.

With a hand on my revolver I instantly made a movement to descend.

As I did so the dim light was suddenly extinguished in utter darkness.

And in the sudden obscurity I felt a man brush past me.

The next instant he whirled, a sinewy fist struck me with the force of a sledge-hammer squarely on my head, and I went tumbling like a log down the steep length of the narrow, slippery staircase.

CHAPTER TWO

THE terrific blow from that sinewy fist and the equally terrific tumble down the dangerously precipitate stairs, had for a moment deprived me of sensibility.

When I regained the power of thought and motion, I was surrounuded by midnight darkness, and not a sound of any kind broke the tomb-like silence of the place.

For a few minutes I listened intently before I staggered up from the cramped position in which I had fallen.

I satisfied myself that I was alone. The money-hunters without a doubt had become frightened and had fled from the house.

I lighted the convenient little bull's-eye, which had long been my faithful companion, and took a survey of my surroundings.

The cellar into which I had been so unexpectedly hurled, extended beneath the entire house without any partition whatever.

The walls were of rough masonry; a huge shelf was suspended by strong wooden supprts from the center of the beams overhead; the floor was of the bare earth.

That a search had been made here for the hidden money was evident; nearly the whole surface of the floor showed excavations and piles of loose earth where the money-hunters had been digging for the Widow Mowbray's secret treasure.

After viewing the cellar, I proceeded to the upper rooms.

There, too, were evidences of the searchers' work. The wainscoting in spots had been removed; portions of the flooring had been taken up; the chimney mantel had been taken down; and several bricks had been pried out of the chimney itself.

I hardly thought they would return to renew their explorations that night; therefore I extinguished my light and retraced my way down to the rear door through which I had entered.

I felt myself completely baffled.

That Mira Mervini—the dead woman's confidential friend—was implicated in the case, I was certain.

But more muscular hands than hers had been at work in the cellar and the chambers.

But that blood-curdling scream had unmistakably been the scream of a woman, and of a woman, too, in mortal terror.

If the scream had been Miss Mervin's, what had occurred to terrify her?

And who was the man who had brushed past me, only to whirl back and deal me such a tremendous blow?

As I asked myself the latter question I started with an ejaculation of anger at my own stupidity.

In the stirring incidents of the last hour my mind had become confused.

But I remembered clearly enough now that just as the dim ray of light on the staircase went out in utter darkness I had caught a glimpse of the man who brushed past.

I had noted the singularly symmetrical frame, the olive skin, the piercing dark eyes, in that one fleeting second.

The man was Mort Mowbray!

In a flash the theory of the case presented itself to my mind.

Mira Mervin and Mrs. Mowbray's step-son were not accomplices.

On the contrary, each unknown to the other had been scheming to secure the dead woman's money.

Miss Mervin had descended to the cellar, where she had been surprised by the man; in her consternation she had uttered the shriek which had so puzzled me.

But if they were not accomplices, then which of the two had been concerned in the mysterious death of the Widow Mowbray?

While I was revolving these various puzzling queries in my mind, I was still standing at the rear door of the house.

Whether the blow and fall had affected me I did not know, but I felt a queer sensation of sluggishness, a strange disinclination to exert myself.

I fancied, too, there was a peculiar odor in the air—an odor of nauseating sweetness, like the scent of some noxious weed.

I at length yielded to the unfamiliar sensation, and threw myself down upon the low doorstep.

As I did so my left hand came in contact with a small glass vial; the stopper had been removed and the stone sill was damp where the contents had obviously been spilled.

As I touched the vial and the wet sill, I noticed that the peculiar scent about me had become more powerful and more nauseating.

In a second it flashed upon my brain that the vial had contained some potent anæsthetic, that the contents had been emptied purposely, that I was being drugged, and that the penetrating vapor which I had already inhaled had caused the queer sensation I was experiencing.

Of course as I threw myself down upon the doorstep, I had breathed a pretty strong whiff of the stuff, whatever it was; and its effect was to instantly dizzy me almost beyond the power of collecting my thoughts.

"It is some mysterious drug which that scoundrel, Mort Mowbray, has brought home with him from India," was the conclusion to which I promptly jumped.

With a mighty effort and with the utmost difficulty, I succeeded in staggering to my feet.

With my right hand I had still retained a mechanical grip upon my revolver; and it was lucky that I had done so.

As I steadied myself in an upright position, I heard a suspicious rustle back of a thick shrub near the door.

My eyes had become accustomed to the gloom, and as I turned a keen glance in that direction I plainly saw a pistol protruding through the screen of leaves.

With an impulse, hastened by a warning click, I flung myself forward, and at the same instant I lifted my revolver and fired.

The missile, intended to end my career, whistled harmlessly over my head. My own bullet had apparently hit some random mark.

I heard a muffled exclamation of pain and then footsteps rapidly retreating.

And a moment later I saw an indistinguishable figure scrambling through the aperture in the fence.

The effects of the drug prevented me from giving chase; I was barely able to put a safe distance between myself and that deadly scent.

As I stopped to inhale a reviving breath of untainted air, a man suddenly walked briskly toward me.

"I heard a shot. What was it? Are you hurt?" the man abruptly asked.

I could not suppress an utterance of astonishment.

The man who hailed me was none other than Mort Mowbray.

In view of what had occurred I suppose I should have been justified in answering him by slipping a pair of iron bracelets over his wrists.

But I doubt I should have been able to accomplish that feat just then.

"I might inquire what your business is in the vicinity of these premises, Mort Mowbray," I returned.

"And I might answer that what is my business is none of yours," he retorted.

The retort was made in prompt and genuine resentment. It was hardly the response of a man conscious of having committed any very heinous crime.

His next words were yet more inconsistent with any theory of his guilt.

"I don't mind telling you, though, as you know who I am. You have the advantage of me there," he said, a second later.

Under the circumstances I was not sorry he had that particular advantage.

"My late step-mother was something of a miser," he continued. "I have a notion that she must have secreted a large sum of money, and I intend to overhaul every nook and cranny until I find it."

"Ah, I see."

"I had an awkward adventure in the house a couple of hours ago. First, I was startled out of my wits by a sudden frightful shriek, and secondly, I brushed past some one on the stairs. I didn't know what to think of the interruption, so I just turned and sent the fellow sprawling down the staircase."

"And you are on your way back to repair damages?"

"You have about guessed it. I am a hot-headed man at times, but I shouldn't like to wantonly injure even an eavesdropper or a spy."

"Allow me to hope that your night's adventure will termine pleasantly," I said, as I bade him a good-night and boarded a passing surface car.

How my own night's adventure would terminate I could not yet foresee.

I had certainly altered my opinion regarding Mort Mowbray; although appearances were much against him, I believed him innocent of anything which would warrant a criminal charge.

Early the next morning I was surprised by a message from young Walter Wayne.

He had spent the night in a prison cell. On the previous afternoon he had been arrested on Miss Mervin's warrant.

The young fellow begged me to consult a reliable lawyer, and to have the crystal locket opened at once.

"Upon reflection, I see the matter in a different light," the young prisoner said in his note to me. "That I did not secure the hidden money when I had it in my power to do so, is sufficient proof of my honesty, I think."

I went immediately to the office of a shrewd and honorable man of law. I stated all the details of the curious case to him, and then we both proceeded to witness the opening of the crystal locket.

The contents were precisely what Walter Wayne had believed.

His aunt had died a wealthy woman.

And all the savings of thirty or more miserly years were secreted in a false bottom of the massive shelf I had noticed suspended from the ceiling of the cellar.

On a folio of paper of a texture so thin and soft that it could easily have been folded into a hollow silver half dollar, instead of a bulging locket three times the size, she had inscribed a perfectly authentic will.

By the terms of this will her miser's treasure was to be divided equally between her step-son and her favorite nephew.

It is needless to say we lost no time in visiting the house she had occupied.

It was the work of but a few moments to remove the false bottom of the hanging shelf.

But we had come too late; the cunningly contrived hiding place was empty—the treasure was gone.

Only the fragments of a mutilated bank-note and two or three coins of small denominations remained.

"This is poor evidence to clear young Wayne," said the lawyer.

"It's dead against him," I was forced to admit.

"All the legal skill in the city won't save him. It would appear that he had got the money in his possession, and that he had trumped up an impossible story to divert suspicion.

The lawyer had started to leave the cellar and I had turned to follow him, when my eyes chanced to rest upon a gleaming green disk in a corner of the empty shelf.

"Your young client is saved," I exclaimed, in triumph, as I picked up the gleaming object.

It was the duplicate locket.

In an instant I knew that Mira Mervin was the criminal.

In her rage and desperation at being foiled by the spurious ornament, she had without doubt undertaken a random search, and by chance had discovered the hiding-place at the very outset.

Without any unnecessary delay, armed with a warrant and accompanied by an officer, I presented myself at the door of the fashionable boarding-house.

We were admitted by a darky bell-boy in natty livery.

The spruce little African ushered us down the hall to the open door of an elegantly furnished back parlor.

As I looked upon the scene before me I felt that earthly justice was to be cheated of her conquest.

Mira Mervin lay upon a sofa, with a physician and lady attendant bending over her.

The magnificent blonde had grown old in a single night; her handsome face was convulsed and haggard; her midnight eyes blazed with the vague horror of insanity, and insane ravings were upon her bloodless lips.

"I shall be accused of Mrs. Mowbray's death! I shall be tortured and hunted until they drive me mad!" she cried.

But Mira Mervin was mad already, and had probably been in some degree deranged for a long time in the past.

She had lucid intervals, however, and in one of the brief periods of sanity she made a full confession, and revealed the cause of the Widow Mowbray's mysterious death.

Miss Mervin had managed to get hold of a few of the curiosities which Mort Mowbray had brought home from India.

Among these were a couple of tiny vials con-

taining a deadly drug, which she supposed to be an Eastern perfume.

One of these vials she had accidentally broken, and the fatal liquid had saturated a portion of Mrs. Mowbray's clothing.

In less than an hour the unfortunate woman was lifeless.

It was then Miss Mervin conceived the scheme of appropriating the hidden savings for her own use.

She conjectured what the crystal locket contained; and she had stolen the ornament, which she afterward lost where Walter Wayne found it.

She had taken the money from the false bottom of the shelf that night just as Mort Mowbray descended to the cellar.

In her fright at seeing him, she had uttered the scream which startled us both.

She had ascended the stairs while I was lying half insensible where I had fallen, emptied the deadly contents of the vial upon the sill of the door which she knew I would presently cross, and then concealed herself behind the bushes.

She feared me, and had determined to insure her own safety at whatever cost.

My random shot had inflicted only a slight bullet wound upon one arm.

It was by the merest chance that she discovered the place where the money was secreted. It was all recovered—banknotes, bonds, and gold—and was shared equally by Mort Mowbray and manly young Walter Wayne.

The two are warm friends; and Walter is now one of the most influential and honored of citizens.

Both were exonerated of any blame in the curious case.

But young Walter, at least, was saved from unmerited disgrace, only through the agency of the crystal locket.

PIGEONS SNARED BY THOUSANDS

THE pioneers of Michigan and other States of the Great Lakes recall sadly the days when wild pigeons were so plentiful in this region that they were killed by men with clubs as they swept in great flocks over the sand hills. In many of the pioneer localities twenty-one meals of wild pigeon a week were not unusual, and much of the great State of Michigan was hewed out of the forest on a pigeon diet. A party would often go into the hills and kill thousands of the birds without a gun, slaughtering thousands only to waste them.

After the first railroads were built, the pigeon crop of several Michigan counties was worth more than their wheat crop. Few people of today realize or can imagine the magnitude of these mighty nestings of the birds. A pigeon nesting would often extend for many miles north, east, south and west. Hundreds of nests would adorn every tree, and the noise from the homecoming and departing birds would be so great that it was often impossible to carry on an ordinary conversation in the woods. Pigeon catching and killing became an industry. Carload after carload was shipped to New York and Eastern cities, and dead pigeons were often piled up until they appeared like small hay stacks.

Trappers from all parts of the country journeyed to the Michigan eldorado for the purpose of catching the birds. They did it, when a large catch was desired, with a net, 16 to 18 feet wide and 30 to 40 feet long. This was arranged with ropes and spring poles, so that when a number of the birds had alighted in the particular spot to which they had been lured by means of the stool-pigeon, the spring poles were released and the net pulled over the spot where the birds had settled, covering the whole number. Few people who see the expression "stool-pigeon" realize how closely its commonly accepted meaning follows the truth. After the spring poles had been bent back and the net covered with light grass so it would not be visible to the birds, a wild pigeon which had been kept alive to act as a stool-pigeon was brought into service.

A leather string was put with a half tie about each leg of the bird. Then with a small cambric needle a white silk thread was passed through the pigeon's eyelid on each side of the head, the ends of the thread were twisted together on top of the bird's head and the pigeon was blindfolded for use. The bird was held by the boots, as the strings were called, and set on the forefinger. It was raised up, and then the hand brought down quickly to see whether the bird would hover properly. When one was found that would suit, it was fastened by the boots to a pad about as large as the hand near the centre of the bed to which the birds in trees within sight were attracted to the bed, which had been scattered with wheat or buckwheat. When the bed had become filled with pigeons, the spring pole was pulled and the net carried over, there being sufficient spring in the poles to spread it fully.

Most trappers bit the birds' necks to kill them, used a pair of pincers for the same purpose. It was not uncommon to take from 500 to 1,000 birds at a single haul, and the sport, with a good stool-pigeon, was considered enchanting by those who followed it.

The greatest enemy of the pigeon trapper was the hawk, which often caught and killed his favorite stool pigeon, just when it was most needed.

After An Amber Ear-ring

By FLORENCE HOWARD

PART FIRST

AT first glance it will appear somewhat extraordinary that Joe Burns should have connected a certain robbery with a man who had died and been buried a year and a half before the said robbery was committed.

But that was the conclusion to which the detective arrived within five minutes after he had reached the scene of operations.

It was the robbery of a safe—a ponderous iron treasure box—which occupied nearly a quarter of the space of a little shipping office.

Appearances indicated that the robber had secreted himself somewhere in the large outer office before the building was closed for the night, and that he had not effected his escape until the doors were opened the following morning.

He had managed to carry away some ten thousand dollars in banknotes and securities, the latter of a character which he could easily convert to cash.

The safe had been forced open in a peculiar way, and it was that peculiarity which suggested the operations of Burt Burger, a professional burglar, whose death a year and a half before no one had the slightest reason to doubt.

The brother officer who had accompanied Joe smiled incredulously.

"You must be out of your bean to get such a notion as that," said he.

Burns took up a curious little steel implement for his inspection. He had discovered it beneath some loose papers which had been pulled from the safe.

"Burger was the only man on this side of the Atlantic or the other, who ever used this implement. He was a skilled machinist; the tool was of his own invention and make," he said.

"He could have made a few for his confederates, I suppose," said the other officer.

"He was not likely to have done so. He made the implement only for himself and for a special job," Burns insisted.

"But somebody else could make the same."

"I think not. He was jealous of his invention; and there was some secret in its construction known only to himself; and it can only be used once or twice at the most," said Joe.

"But we know the man is dead."

"We know there was a large insurance on his life."

"And the company paid the policy without a murmur," remarked the other officer.

"It was in another State where the man passed as an honest citizen."

"I don't follow your argument, Joe."

"You think the shipper—Mr. Goldgrain—is correct in his suspicions?"

"I think he was quite right in causing the immediate arrest of his clerk Val Warron."

"Young Warron claims that the small amount found upon him was a sum which had been paid to him after the safe was locked for the night; that he frequently took charge of considerable amounts under similar circumstances."

"His employer thinks he has been trusted too far, and you must admit that there are several points of evidence dead against him."

Joe was forced to admit that such was the fact.

A web of circumstantial evidence—which it is not necessary to detail—had been woven about the shipper's unfortunate young clerk. It was not supposed he had effected so bold and cunning a robbery unaided; but there were several important items of information which pointed to his being an accessory, if not the principal in the affair.

But in spite of all this, Burns could not help recalling the past exploits of the man, Burt Burger, in similar cases.

"It is his cunning work over again," he thought as he once more inspected the forced safe.

His second inspection resulted in detecting what might prove a clue.

Among the disarranged papers where Joe had found the curious steel implement he found a more trifling article—a pear-shaped piece of rarely clear amber, which held a tiny insect imprisoned in its golden center, and which had been fashioned into a lady's ear-ring.

The golden setting was slightly broken. Burns reasoned that perhaps the robber had placed it loosely in his pocket with the intention of having it repaired, and that it had dropped forth during his operations with the safe.

Anyhow, he soon ascertained that neither Mr. Goldgrain nor any person in his employ had ever seen the odd ear ornament before.

Joe stowed it away in one of his pockets for future reference, and presently left the building.

His curiosity concerning the reported death of the man Burger had been singularly aroused.

He decided to begin his investigations of the Goldgrain robbery case by satisfying himself whether the report had been authentic.

To do this he thought best to take a flying trip to the country place where he had lived.

The place was a little hamlet about one hundred miles from the city, and nearly ten from a town of any size or importance.

At the latter place Joe learned that he should

be obliged to hire a conveyance or wait for the stage which ran daily between the town and his destination.

He concluded to wait for the stage, and so crossed to a comfortable hotel opposite the station, strolled into the dining-room and ordered refreshments.

A party, evidently tourists, occupied a table at the farther end of the room; and near them he noticed a handsome young woman who seemed to be quite alone.

At that moment, if Burns could have known it, he might have taken up his trail in the case and saved himself some uncomfortable future experiences.

But of course he was ignorant of the fact, and after an indifferent glance at the people occupying the table, turned his attention to the excellent dishes set before him.

The party had finished their meal and had arisen to leave the dining-room, when an individual whom Joe judged to be a local constable suddenly entered and approached the young woman.

The handsome creature shrank back indignantly as the man placed one coarse hand roughly upon her shoulder.

"Ye can't leave this 'ere town, miss, and take property as ain't paid fer with ye. This 'ere paper, I hereby present, is a bill for that ar jewelery; you kin just hand over the one or the other, miss—either the money or the amber set."

The fellow had announced his errand so roughly that the entire party was gazing in startled surprise at the young woman, who was naturally embarrassed.

But she instantly recovered her self-possession.

"Here is the money," she said haughtily as she handed him the required sum from a well-filled purse and walked quietly away.

It was not until the door closed behind her that the possible significance of the incident struck Joe Burns.

The bill was for a set of amber jewelry! The detective drew the odd ear-ring from his pocket and intercepted the local functionary.

"Was the amber set anything like this?" he asked him.

He could not inform Joe; he could only direct him to the store where the set had been purchased.

The store was not a block away.

The proprietor himself was behind the counter.

He identified the ear ornament at once.

It belonged without a possibility of doubt to the set he had sold to the handsome young lady some weeks before.

He happened not to have the exact change for the bank-note of a large denomination which she tendered.

He allowed her to take the set as he knew she was stopping at the hotel, and as she promised to send a mesenger over immediately with the required amount.

But no messenger nor money had appeared; nor had he seen the young lady again until that morning when he observed her enter the hotel.

Then he had promptly secured the services of the constable to collect the amount or demand the jewelry.

But she was a stranger to him. He knew neither her name nor place of residence. Burns hurried back to the hotel.

But he could learn nothing about her there.

And, to his disappointment, he was informed she had just stepped aboard the express train, which had already steamed away toward the city.

All his inquiries elsewhere failed bringing to light anything by which he might either identify or trace her.

Meanwhile the stage was making ready to start, and he concluded to defer inquiries in that line and proceed to his destination.

The hamlet was an out-of-the-way little place, comprising some dozen dwellings, the usual church and school building, a blacksmith shop and a post office and store combined. Burns had no difficulty in locating the spot where the man Burger had lived.

It was a comparatively cozy farm-house, a quarter of a mile from the hamlet itself, and was surrounded by several acres of orchard land.

It was now inhabited by a farmer to whom Burger had sold it some months previous to his reported death. The detective soon ascertained enough to convince him that his newly aroused suspicions might not be wide of the mark at all events.

After disposing of the farm, he still kept a room in the house.

Of course, the real character of the man was never guessed by the simple people among whom he had secluded himself.

He was supposed to be engaged in some lucrative busines in the city; and from time to time he was visited by different persons whom he claimed were his partners or agents in the business.

One of these visitors, claiming to be a physician, was his sole attendant during his sickness, which had occurred while some malignant epidemic was prevailing in the place.

Owing to the nature of the ailment his remains had not been viewed, but with the exception of the coffin not being opened, the funeral observances had been conducted in the ordinary manner.

He had been buried in a small burial place between the hamlet and the farm-house, and a plain granite slab had been erected to mark the mound.

The stone had been erected by the brother to whom the large life insurance had been paid.

After reviewing the information the detective had gleaned from various places, he saw there

was but one way of verifying or refuting his suspicions.

It was a daring move to make, but he believed that the result would justify the means.

There was no use consulting the local authorities; Joe would be opposed at the outset; valuable time would be consumed in settling formulas, and a noise made about the matter which would delay justice or perhaps thwart it altogether.

The move Burns meant to make was to satisfy himself whether an empty coffin or a human body was interred in the grave which was marked with a slab bearing Burt Burger's name.

He made preparations with caution; a misty night and a recent soaking rain which had softened the earth were favorable for his purpose.

It was long past midnight before he ventured to begin his risky and perhaps dangerous job.

The mound was in a corner of the inclosure farthest from the road, and two sides of the angle were screened by thick trees and a high stone fence. A couple of blankets, judiciously placed, effectually concealed the light of his lantern. The officer had no trouble in removing the soaked, sandy soil to a depth and size sufficient for his purpose.

But to lower himself into the excavation, to uncover the ghastly thing which might be there, was a different and more trying task.

It required all his courage to master his repugnance sufficiently to proceed.

Joe had provided himself with tools which could be used rapidly and almost noiselessly; and in less time than it takes to relate it he had removed a portion of the outer box, and unscrewed the lid of the coffin itself.

At the discovery he made he could scarcely restrain a shout of satisfaction.

The sole contents of the coffin was a layer of tightly-packed brick!

As he replaced the covering and was about to raise himselff from the excavation his lantern was suddenly extinguished and a savagely-aimed blow sent him faling back into the grave.

Before he could right himself to a position of advantage a mass of the heavy wet earth came crushing down upon him, followed by another, and still another.

Not a word had been spoken, but he had seen the outlines of a burly figure, and he could hear his fierce breathing as he shoveled the masses of soil furiously down.

PART SECOND.

JOE BURNS had stood face to face with more imminent danger, but never found himself in a more extraordinary position than at the moment when he felt himself being swiftly buried alive in that empty grave.

The unknown miscreant continued to pour down the masses of loose earth with furious haste and without an instant's cessation.

The detective's left arm was cramped beneath him, and although his right was free, he did not care to make any movement until he was certain of gaining an advantage.

To have sprung upright would have been to challenge a second attack more terrific than the first.

By a little cautious maneuvering Joe succeeded at last in releasing himself from his cramped position.

With his right hand upon his revolver and with his left clutching the granite slab, he suddenly exerted all his strength and sprang clear from his singular trap.

The suddenness of the movement insured its success.

The man had probably believed the officer too stunned by his blow for outcry or resistance, and for the second had been thrown off his guard.

As Joe leaped abruptly into view he dropped the shovel, muttered something under his breath, and then darted away through the darkness.

Burns started in pursuit, but after a moment's reflection retraced his steps.

Burns saw that the man was more familiar with the ground than he was, and that there was no hope of overtaking him.

And besides, if the man was Burt Burger, as Burns believed him to be, he was convinced that the clue of the amber ear-ring would sooner or later put him upon the crook's track.

Joe relighted the lantern and then gathered his blankets and other articles into a compact bundle.

The bundle he stored away beneath a heap of dead leaves and twigs in an angle of the high stone fence, and then he directed his steps to the lodging he had engaged for the night.

The next morning he left a few necessary instructions with the justice of the peace, and then took a seat in the stage on his way back to the city.

But the astonishing discovery Burns had made did not effect young Val Warron's release.

The testimony of several witnesses showed that he had been loitering in the vicinity of the office at a late hour; and he was the only one, excepting his employer and the cashier, who knew that a large amount of money was kept in the safe at that particular time.

A considerable sum not his own was found in his possession, and he had refused to explain his object in being in the vicinity at night, when his home was at the other end of the city.

There was nothing yet which would acquit Warron of some knowledge of the robbery.

Several weeks passed by, but the detective could secure no trace of Burt Burger.

From the time he disappeared in the darkness of the lonely country burial ground, all track of him seemed swallowed up in mystery.

But Joe believed he was somewhere in the city,

and that to find the unknown young woman who bought the amber set would be to find him also.

It was partly accident which again placed the clue of the odd ear ornament in his hands.

The officer was passing the show-rooms of a building where articles of the kind were extensively manufactured when his attention was attracted by a young girl who had just entered.

The detective recognized her as the daughter of the janitor employed in the shipping office building.

She was herself employed as a steamstress by some wealthy family. Burns followed her into the store, and paused at a little distance from her as she stopped at the counter.

She inquired if an ear-ring which she had brought with her could be matched.

As she exhibited the ornament Joe started.

It was the duplicate of the one in his possession.

"Where did you get this, Dora?" Joe asked her.

She turned her pretty eyes sharply upon him at the question. The detective had met her frequently in his visits at the office building, and she was aware that he was a detective engaged in the robbery case.

"Why?" she asked.

"It may help Valentine if you tell me all about it."

"I don't know how the ear-ring can help him; but I know the night he was loitering so long outside the office he was only waiting for me. He was to meet me on the way home, and we missed each other."

"You ought to have mentioned that at the hearing."

"I wasn't allowed. They all believe him guilty, and I was forbidden to mix myself up in it."

The pretty little thing looked indignant and ready to cry.

"It will all come out right for Valentine. But tell me about the ear-ring."

There was not much to tell, in Dora's opinion.

The ear-ring she had brought to be matched belonged to Miss Carrie Cordette—a member of the family where Dora was employed.

Miss Cordette had broken the other; she had intrusted it to a gentleman to be repaired, and he had lost it.

Dora was ignorant of the gentleman's name.

But Miss Cordette had met him while she was spending a few weeks somewhere out of town.

Joe made a note of the lady's address and went up to her house.

She remembered him at once as having been in the dining-room of the hotel when the embarrassing scene with the country constable occurred.

"That amber set has been nothing but an annoyance to me," she said. "I intrusted the man for them to a friend, and he neglected or forgot to do as he promised."

"Was the friend known to you as Burt Burger?" Burns asked bluntly.

"I am acquainted with no person of that name."

"It was he who lost the ear-ring."

"You are mistaken. The gentleman to whom I gave the money to pay for the set, and who lost the ear-ring is Mr. Stanhope Delmotte—an English gentleman of some distinction, I believe."

"Do you know where he stops in the city?"

Miss Cordette did not know. She had not seen him recently, but she had heard him mention being a member of some fashionable club—she had forgotten what club it was, however.

Assuring Miss Cordette that her rare amber ornament would be finally restored to her, and that the expense of a duplicate was unnecessary, the detective left her.

The result of his interview with her was not encouraging.

It would appear that Joe was being baffled at every turn of the case.

And although he knew there was hardly evidence enough against Valentine Warron to convict him, he knew also that he would never be wholly cleared of the charge unless the really guilty one was unearthed.

Joe feared that Burt Burger had seized the opportunity to flee from the country.

If he surmised that Burns was on his trail he would very likely do so.

And that he did conjecture Joe was tracking him seemed proved by his fierce attack in the lonely burial ground.

And it was unlikely that Stanhope Delmotte—an English gentleman of distinction and a member of a fashionable club—was associated with bank breaking or with Joe's terrible adventure over the miscreant Burger's empty grave.

Burns thought best to see him, however; he might be able to offer a useful hint in relation to the clue of the amber ear-ring. The officer had access to two or three of the popular clubs; he was on the point of entering the rooms of one of these when he was accosted by a club man—an old acquaintance—who was lazily enjoying a cigar on the pavement before the entrance. The detective questioned him concerning Stanhope Delmotte. His acquaintance stated that Delmotte was but slightly known at the club, but that he appeared to have an abundance of means, but that the members were not disposed to welcome him among them.

It would be but a mere chance if Joe met him there at all.

Burns had started for the opposite side of the avenue, and had traversed about half the crossing, when he was startled by the furious thud of hoofs and by the appearance of a horseman plunging at a lightning pace directly upon him.

As he sprang aside the rider passed so near that his outstretched stirrup grazed Burns.

The horse was less reckless or more humane

than its rider, for it had shied rather than plunge over Joe, despite the unmistakable urging of the man to ride him down.

As Burns gazed in surprise at the retreating horseman, he looked back and Joe recognized the scowling visage of the person who had attacked him in the burial ground.

"Delmotte is a reckless rider," his acquaintance remarked.

"Is that the man you know as Stanhope Delmotte?"

The detective was beginning to see light in the case.

"Certainly; he is heir to half a dozen immense estates and an English title," was the amused answer.

Early that evening Joe presented himself at the stylish boarding-house which his acquaintance—the club man—had designated as Delmotte's stopping place.

The servant who admitted the officer ushered him to the door of his rooms and announced his name.

"Say to the man I have no business whatever with detectives," Delmotte responded in a lordly tone as he turned in his chair and sent a supercilious scowl back toward the partially open door.

"But I have business with *you*, Burt Burger. The amber ornament you dropped beside Mr. Goldgrain's plundered safe has betrayed you."

Joe had expected a desperate struggle, and he was not disappointed.

But he finally overpowered the crook, and led him away a secure prisoner.

He insisted in denying his identity to the last, but the bulk of the stolen money and securities was recovered from among his effects. Altogether the evidence against him was overwhelming, and he was promptly convicted.

At the expiration of the sentence he is now serving, he is probably doomed to undergo a trial, at the instance of the insurance company he so cunningly defrauded by the aid of a spurious physician, a pretended death and a coffin weighted with bricks.

Valentine Warron was released honorably. He afterwards married pretty Dora, the janitor's daughter.

And Miss Cordette's present to the bride was the amber set, which had cost her so dearly through her misplaced trust in an impostor.

But pretty Dora values most the ear-ring—the odd clue which saved her lover.

Mr. Goldgrain presented Joe with a handsome reward.

"It is not," he said, "entirely because you recovered my money; it is because I appreciate your efforts in behalf of an honest and unjustly accused young man."

DUTCH TO RECLAIM THE ZUYDER ZEE

ACCORDING to pre-war estimates, the entire work of reclaiming the Zuyder Zee would have cost approximately $88,800,000, but, with the increased cost of labor and materials in the last six years, it is believed the cost will be well in excess of $125,000,000. The work will be done and paid for by the State, through special loans, and the State, through rental of the land reclaimed, expects the scheme to pay for itself within a few years and thereafter yield a handsome revenue.

The total amount of land to be reclaimed will be 827 square miles, which will constitute a twelfth province of Holland, capable of supporting a population of 300,000, and wherein several cities of ancient trading fame are expected to be restored to commercial importance. The engineering work is now well under way.

Centuries ago, at the beginning of the Christian era when the Romans had their settlements in Holland, much of space now occupied by the Zuyder Zee was land and the south part of the present sea was a lake called Flevo. Northwest tempests swept the North Sea, washing away the tract of dry land between the sea and the lake. One large, shallow body of water—the Zuyder Zee—was formed.

The towns situated on its bank throve as the merchantmen came into their ports. But as ships became larger and of deeper draught, traffic was diverted to deeper seas, leaving the once famous towns on the Zuyder's shores mere fishing villages, which they are now, while Amsterdam's commerce came to her through a canal leading direct to the North Sea.

Dr. A. A. Beekman of The Hague, who has devoted nearly all his life to the ideal of reclaiming the Zuyder Zee, explained the plans to the Associated Press correspondent. He is now a member of the State Council which will carry out the work.

"The first thing to do," said Dr. Beekman, "is to construct a gigantic dike to keep out the North Sea. This will be thirty miles long, stretching from Wieringen to the Frisian coast, where the water ranges in depth from thirty-three to eleven feet. It will be everywhere sixteen to seventeen feet above the sea level. There will be a double-track railway on top of the dike. Its construction will take nine years and its cost, by pre-war estimates, will be more than $20,000,000.

"The total surface to be reclaimed is 827 square miles. There will remain a lake of 600 square miles, which will act as a reservoir during the periods when, owing to northwestern storms, the waters of the River Yesel and of the canals cannot be emptied into the North Sea. The water of the lake will be let out into the North Sea."

The Science of Fortune Telling

[Before ending this series of articles, we will add two more subjects which will be of more than passing interest to our readers.]

OLD SUPERSTITIONS

Hippocrates, by the use of some parts of this animal, attached to himself divine honors; for therewith he cured pestilence and contagion, consumptions and many other diseases, for he cleansed the fish of a viper. The utmost part of the tail and head being cut off, he stripped off the skin, casting away the bowels and gall; he reserved of the intestines only the heart and liver; he drew out all the blood, with the vein running down the backbone; he bruised the flesh and the aforesaid bowels with the bones, and dried them in a warm oven until they could be powdered, which powder he springled on honey; being clarified and boiled until he knew that the flesh in boiling had cast aside their virtue, as well in the broth as in the vapors; he then added the spices of his country to cloak the secret.

Amber is an amulet; a piece of red amber worn about one is a preventative against poisons.

Likewise a sapphire stone is as effectual. Oil of amber, or amber dissolved in pure spirits of wine, comforts the womb being disordered, if fumigation of it be made with the warts of the shank of a horse, it will cure many disorders of that region.

The liver and gall of an eel, likewise, being gradually dried and reduced to powder, and taken in the quantity of a filbert nut, in a glass of warm wine, cause a speedy and safe delivery.

Rhubard, on account of its violent antipathy, wonderfully purges. Music is a well-known specific for curing the bite of insects; likewise, water cures the hydrophobia. Warts are cured by paring off the same, or by burying as many pebbles, secretly, as the party has warts. The king's evil may be cured by the heart of a toad worn about the neck, first being dried. Hippomanes excites lust by the bare touch, or being suspended on the party. If any one shall spit in the hand with which he struck or hurt another, so shall the wound be cured; likewise, if any one shall draw the halter wherewith a malefactor was hung across the throat of one who has the quincy, it certainly cures him in three hours; also the herb cinque-foil being gathered before the sun, one leaf thereof cures the tertian, and four quartan ague. Rape-seed sown with cursings and imprecations grows the fairer and thrives, but with praises the reverse. The juice of deadly nightshade, distilled, and given in a proportionate quantity, makes the party imagine almost whatever you choose. The herb nip, being heated in the hand of any other party, they shall never quit you so long as you retain that herb. The herbs arsement, comfrey, flaxwood, dragonwort, adder's tongue, being steeped in cold water, and for some time applied on a wound or ulcer, they grow warm, and buried in a muddy place, cureth the wound or sore to which they were applied. Again, if any one place the leaves of assarabaca drawing them upwards, they will purge another, who is ignorant of the drawing, by vomit only; but if they wrestled downward to the earth, they purge by stool. A sapphire or a stone that is of a deep blue color, if it be rubbed on a tumor, wherein the plague discovers itself (before the party is too far gone) and by and by it be removed from the sick, the absent jewel attracts all the poison or contagion therefrom. And thus much is sufficient to be said concerning natural occult virtues, whereof we speak in a mixed and miscellaneous manner.

THE KEY AND BOOK CHARM

To find out first two letters of a future wife's or husband's name, take a small Bible and the key to your front street door, and having opened to Solomon's Songs, chap, viii., ver. 6 and 7, place the wards of the key on those two verses, and let the bow of the key be about an inch out of the top of the Bible; then shut the book and tie it around with your garter, so as the key will not move, and the person who wishes to know his or her future husband or wife's signature, must suspend the Bible by putting the forefinger of the right hand under the bow of the key, and the other person in like manner on the other side of the bow of the key, who must repeat the following verses after the other person's saying the alphabet one letter to each time repeating them.

It must be observed that you mention to the person who repeats the verses, before you begin, which you intend to try first, whether surname or Christian name, and take care to hold the Bible steady, and when you arrive at the appointed letter, the book will turn around under your finger, and that you will find to be the first letter of your intended's name.

Solomon's Songs, chap. viii., ver. 6 and 7.—"Set me a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave, the coals thereof are coals of fire which hath a most vehement flame."

"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned."

The Meaning of Dreams

MAD.—To dream you are mad, or that you are in company with mad people, is very good to the dreamer; it promises long life, riches, happy marriage, success in trade; if a farmer, some accident will happen to a part of your live stock, but will have plentiful crops; if you have a law-suit, it will be determined greatly in your favor.

MARRIAGE.—To dream you are married is ominous of death, and very unfavorable to the dreamer; it denotes poverty, a prison, and misfortunes. To dream you assist at a wedding is the forerunner of some pleasing news and great success. To dream of lying with your newly married husband or wife threatens danger and sudden misfortunes, and also that you will lose a part of your property; to the sailor, it argues storms and shipwrecks, with a narrow escape from death.

MONKEYS.—To dream of these mischievous creatures is ominous of evil; they announce deceit in love, unfaithfulness in the married state; undutiful children; malicious enemies; and an attack by thieves.

MOON.—To dream of the moon is a very favorable omen; it denotes sudden and unexpected joy; great success in love, and that the dreamer is tenderly beloved. To dream of seeing the new moon is good for tradesmen, farmers, and lovers; it is the forerunner of success and happiness.

MOUNTAINS.—To dream you see steep and craggy mountains presages difficulties in accomplishing your designs; if you ascend them and gain the top, you will be successful in whatever you undertake, become very rich, and arrive at great honors in the state; to a maid they denote that she will marry a man who will become rich and powerful, and that her children will be people of consequence.

MUSIC.—To dream you hear delicious music is a very favorable omen; it denotes joyful news from a long-absent friend; to married people, it denotes sweet-tempered children; in love, it shows that your sweetheart is very fond of you, is good-tempered, sincere and constant. Rough and discordant music foretells trouble, vexation and disappointment.

NIGHTINGALE—To dream of this pretty warbler is the forerunner of joyful news; great success in business, of plentiful crops, and of a sweet-tempered lover. For a married woman to dream of a nightingale shows that she will have children who will be great singers.

ORCHARD.—To dream you are in an orchard denotes that you will become rich by the inheritance of a good legacy; that you will marry much to your advantage. For a married person to dream of being in an orchard shows an increase of children, and that they will become rich and live happy; it also denotes that you will have a son that will rise to a great preferment in the state, and be a great friend to the poor; in love it denotes affection and constancy in your sweetheart, and that you will travel before you marry.

OWL.—To dream of this bird of night is a very bad omen, it foretells sickness, poverty, imprisonment, and want of success in your undertakings; it also forewarns you that some male friend will turn out perfidious, and endeavor to do you a very great injury, in which, without the utmost caution on your part, he will succeed.

PEACOCK.—To dream of seeing this beautiful bird is a very good omen, it denotes great success in trade; to a man, a very beautiful wife, much riches and a good place; to a maid, a good and rich husband; to a widow, that she will be courted by one who will tell her many fine tales, without being sincere; it also denotes great prosperity by sea, and a handsome wife in a distant part.

PIGEONS.—To dream you see pigeons flying imports hasty news of a very pleasant nature, and great success in your undertakings; they are very favorable to lovers, as they announce constancy in your sweetheart, but also that the person you love will be absent from you a long while on a journey; if your lover is at sea, they denote that he has a pleasant voyage, continues faithful and will return rich.

PIT.—To dream of falling into a deep pit shows some very heavy misfortune is about to attend you; that your sweetheart is false and prefers another; to a sailor, it forebodes some sad disaster at the next port you touch at. To dream you are in a pit, and that you climb out of it without much trouble, foreshows that you will have many enemies, and experience much trouble, but that you will overcome them and surmount your difficulties, marry well and become rich; to a sailor, it denotes that he will experience shipwreck, and be cast on a foreign shore, where he will be hospitably received, fall in love and marry a rich and handsome wife, quit the sea and live at ease on shore.

RACING.—To dream you are running a race is a token of good, presages much success in life, and that you will speedily hear some joyful news; in love it denotes that you will conquer all your rivals and be happy in the union with the object of your affections. To dream you are riding a race shows disappointment and anger, bad success in trade and in love; to a married woman, it denotes the loss of her husband's affections, and that her children will be in trouble.

(To be continued)

Current News

THE SUN AS A SOURCE OF POWER

In a recent paper on this subject, Mr. C. Le Roy Meisinger records that in certain subtropical regions, where coal is scarce, such as Egypt, the Punjab and the Karoo of South Africa, teak-wood boxes, blackened within, fitted with glass tops and properly insulated, have been found to register from 240 to 275 deg. Fahr. in the middle of the day, and, with the addition of an auxiliary mirror, to reach even 320 deg. These boxes are used as ovens for cooking, as well as for many other purposes.

MACHINE FOR LYING

Science is working on a machine which will tell whether you are lying or not. Prof. H. E. Burtt, instructor in psychology department of the Ohio State University, is perfecting the apparatus and registering his data to establish this possibility.

The subject under observation has his blood pressure and his inhaling and exhaling registered. Burtt is trying to determine the exact ratio between inhaling and exhaling when the subject is lying.

The breathing and blood pressure of the person is more rapid when he is prevaricating, Prof. Burtt says.

THE FUTURE OF THE SUBMARINE

In a paper read by W. S. King-Hall, R. N., at the Royal United Service Institution in London, the author stated that any advantage possessed by the submarine over other ships of war is on the wane. The advantage of the submerged ship has fallen from nine to one against the surface ship in 1914 to seven to three in 1919, and it is likely to be only six to seven by 1930. It is his belief that the development of submarine detecting apparatus will give large ships a certain measure of protection against tactical attack by submarines. The capital ship will continue to be a surface vessel, and the idea of making her a partially submersible ship has been abandoned. He believes that the smaller types of vessel might be given a certain degree of submersible quality, particularly for the work of reconnaissance.

AIRPLANES EASILY DELIVER BELATED MAIL TO STEAMSHIPS AT SEA

Experiments have proved it entirely practicable to deliver belated transatlantic mail to steamers at sea by airplanes. The ship may have taken its departure several hours previously, yet the flying machine, with a speed of 100 miles or more an hour, can easily catch up with it and put the mail aboard. A plane of the "flying boat" type is used for the purpose, and the waterproof mailbag is held in a chute on the side of the hull. The aviator flies over the ship and the rigging entangles a long line dropped from the plane that has a grapple on its end. This line is attached to the mail bag, which, when the grapple tails catch, is jerked out of its chute, falling into the sea. It is then an easy matter to haul the mail bag aboard, while the steamer continues its uninterrupted voyage.

PLATINUM RUBLES NOW WORTH $54

Many coin collectors are familiar with the Russian platinum coins issued between 1828 and 1845, during which period 1,373,091 three-ruble pieces were minted, besides a few six-ruble and 12-ruble pieces, writes Dr. G. F. Kunz in Science. The three-ruble piece was worth $2.33 and it weighed 10.3 grams, for platinnum was then worth but $7 an ounce; with platinum at $165 an ounce, the intrinsic value of such a coin to-day would be more than $54 of our money.

In view of the fact that the platinum output continues to be much smaller than some years ago, while the increasing demand for jewelry purposes offsets the falling off in the demand for munitions processes, it appears likely that the price will continue to go up, at least until the full resumption of platinum mining in Russia serves as a check. The search for the discovery of new sources is being diligently prosecuted, and Colombia seems the most hopeful of all the regions except Russia.

EYES GROW KEENER IN THE DARK

On entering a dark room after a stay in the outside daylight the eye at once begins to increase in sensitivity. At first this increase appears to be slow, but after five minutes the increase is quite rapid, the eye acquiring a sensitivity several hundred times its initial value. After thirty minutes' sojourn in the dark the sensitivity still increases, but more slowly than before, and after forty-five minutes or an hour the maximum sensitivity is reached. The final sensitivity varies slightly with different people, but in fully adapted condition the eye is easily 5,000 or 10,000 times more sensitive than it was at the beginning.

These facts are obtained from a study of the sensitiveness of the eye in the dark made by Selig Hecht of Creighton University, Omaha, and published in the Journal of General Physiology. Mr. Hecht's study goes to show that the increased sensitivenes is due to a reversible photochemical reaction within the retina, involving a photosensitive substance and its two products of decomposition.

SOME RECENT PATENTS, ETC.

Gymnastic apparatus to be attached to the head of a bed to permit persons to exercise before rising has been been patented by a Philadelphian.

The government of Uruguay will establish a school for farm foremen, the pupils being limited to young men unable to pay for their education.

Like a gear-wheel with the teeth turned downward is the head of a new long-handled spoon intended for stirring the contents of deep cooking utensils.

Of Eurpean invention is a machine that embroiders designs on three dozen pairs of stockings at once, a battery of needles making 288 stitches simultaneously.

A shoulder shield for icemen has been invented, which protects their shoulders from cakes of ice carried and also leads the drippings away from their clothing.

Patents have been granted a Japanese resident of Los Angeles for apparatus for treating diseases by applications of heat gradually increasing in degree until a patient becomes able to withstand the maximum temperature.

A recently patented toaster holds a slice of bread between two spring clips so that the heat can strike its entire surface.

A patient has been granted for a brush and comb mounted on a box into which they fold for carrying or to protect them from dust.

Driven by a bicycle gearing and a propeller, a miniature submarine has been invented in which bathers can plunge beneath the water.

A process has been invented in Holland for maufacturing a food for swine from fish refuse that does not affect the flavor of the pork.

BIG SNAKE SEEN

A huge reptile that is known as "the big snake" has been seen in the neighborhood of St. Michaels, Maryland, off and on for the last 30 years. Persons have claimed to have seen this snake before and since prohibition went into effect in Talbot County.

"The big snake" made his reappearance one Sunday recently. Previous to that he had not been staged for years. Observers agree that he is from 15 to 20 feet or more long and as big around as a good-sized saucer. None has dared to tackle him, and the serpent has always escaped.

Samuel Harrison, his wife and boy were walking along the railroad through the woods near the Pea Neck Road. The boy went into the woods a bit and came running back, saying he had seen a monster snake. Harrison went into the thicket and saw the serpent. His head, it is said, was raised about five feet from the ground, and his forked tongue was darting out menacingly. When Harrison saw its size he stopped short, knowing it would be foolish to tackle it with a stick. He backed out of the woods, keeping his eye on the serpent as long as it was in sight. He reported the reappearance of the monster in St. Michaels, and a "snake posse" was at once organized among the young men, who, armed with shotguns and pistols, made a search of the woods. They are still searching, as the snake has disappeared.

"The big snake" first was reported on Beverly farm about 30 years ago by Crittenden Harper, who saw part of his body lying along a rail fence and the other part coiled around and up an oak tree. Subsequently William B. Harper saw him in Bagsey's woods. According to the latter, the serpent was tearing through the woods, his head raised four feet from the ground and making as much noise as a horse.

Earl Harrison, the Chaplain brothers and many others have had views of "the big snake" in the last 30 years, and it has become a part of the legendary lore of St. Michaels.

ABOLITION OF MARRIAGE PROPOSED IN FRANCE

A terrible remedy for depopulation in France is suggested by Dr. Paul Carnot in Paris Medical. He points out that the French race will be swept out of existence within twenty years unless French women make what he calls a "superhuman effort of maternity;" there are now in France 2,000,000 unmarried women capable of becoming mothers, but for whom it will be impossible to find husbands, owing to the slaughter of men during the war; there are in all Europe now 15,000,000 more women than men.

Dr. Carnot rejects both the solutions that have been offered: (1) to marry French women to foreigners; (2) to permit polygamy for a certain period, his reason against the latter being that men under existing circumstances find it difficult enough to support one wife, let alone several.

What Dr. Carnot suggests is the abolition of marriage in favor of the matriarchal family supported by the state, in which there would be no husband, but which would consist of mothers and children only. The supreme law of a race, he argues, is not perish, and, socially speaking, every woman ought to become a mother. Motherhood, he argues, should be an honorable and highly recompensed career, and she should be well paid by the state for every child she contributes to it. And he adds that all those who have failed to fulfil their duties to the state in the matter of bearing children should be compelled to leave their money to support the children of those who have.

As will be seen from this brief abstract, Dr. Carnot leaves out of his consideration the sacredness of marriage and the repugnance of all decent women to lower themselves to the status of beasts. However materialistic the men of France may have become, French women still cling tenaciously to the old ideals of wifehood and motherhood.

SAINTS KILLED BY DEMONS

The murder and mutilation of three of the seven occupants of a camp of sadhus, or religious mendicants, outside the city of Rawalpindi has been attributed by the masses, Mohammedan as well as Hindu, to supernatural agency, and is reported by the frontier correspondent of the Englishman to have caused the greatest excitement throughout the Rawalpindi, Nowshera, and Peshawar districts, so that for the time being "politics is forgotten altogether."

The term sahdu is derived from a Sanskirt word denoting completeness, and means one who is perfect—a saint or sage. It is commonly used by all Hindu religious mendicants. Clad generally only in a loin-cloth and with his body covered with ashes, the sadhu wanders up and down the country with his begging bowl in hand, and is held in great veneration and awe. Hence there is widespread belief that the crime was not the work of human beings at all, but of rakshahs, or demons, who in the days of the Hindu epics were often seen on earth, and have now returned.

In the morning the bodies of the three sadhus were found tied to trees and terribly mutilated. The surviving four men were cowering around a fire, muttering charms and in a great state of excitement and fear. They are reported to have informed the police that the camp was attacked by a band of men, who selected the three victims and cut them to pieces, warning the others that if they attempted to interfere they would also be killed.

But this did not prevent the rakshah theory gaining ground, and a panic ensued in the city. All business ceased, shops were closed, and houses shuttered and barred. The bolder spirits went down to the scene of the crime to see for themselves, but what they saw only convinced them the more of demoniac agency.

MIGHTY RIVERS RUSH THROUGH SKY

In his spectacular flight establishing a new aviation altitude record Major Rudolph W. Schroeder found trade winds of 200 miles an hour velocity far above the clouds, press dispatches state. The Dayton (Ohio) test pilot merely reported one of the new phenomena resulting from a study of the geography of the air, stimulated by aerial travel, according to a bulletin of the National Geographic Society.

"While the chemistry and physics of the atmosphere are understood, the geography of the air is still practically unknown," says Alexander McAdie in a communication to the society.

"We are aware that there are well marked areas, zones and levels in this inverted bowl, and, though we may not see them, there are mighty rivers, far surpassing any of the rivers of the earth in volume and speed, rushing on for miles and miles, flowing vertically as well as horizontally. There are vast calm areas and stagnant pools; also choppy seas and regions of g : turbulence.

"We are learning to-day that there are various layers in the air, which must be explored and studied before airships can travel in safety. In flying men will use only the lower strata, the cloud levels. Above all clouds are far-stretching heights, which, too, must be explored, not by plane and dirigible, but by the sounding balloons of the aerographer. One might say offhand that there could be no geography of the air, for there are no continents, oceans or visible geographical features in this 'inverted bowl' which we call the sky. Do we not look clear through the atmosphere up into the heavens and, except for passing clouds, do we not know that there is nothing to be seen?

"If the density of the atmosphere remained constant it could all be compressed into a layer about five miles thick. In that case the highest mountain peaks would stand out in space piercing the so-called homogeneous atmosphere. But the density decreases with elevation, and when the aviator reaches an elevation of 10,000 meters he is in a medium which is only about one-third as dense as at the ground. There are no clouds above this level.

"The greatest discovery yet made in exploring the air is that the atmosphere consists of two great layers, the lower extending from sea level up to 10,000 meters, in which there is a steady fall of temperature and elevation. This is called the troposphere. Above this there is no fall and up to 20,000 meters a slight rise. The upper layer is known as the stratosphere.

"It is actually possible to-day for an airplane to rise from the ground to the bottom of the stratosphere, say about six miles, in one hour. If we want to explore somewhat higher, say twenty miles, we install light instruments on a sounding balloon.

"The intrepid aviator who tries to force his way at high speed against an adverse wind meets only with increasing resistance. But when the wind favors, then the winged airman spurns the slow fellow creeping on wheels below. With accelerated speed he passes over the moor, mountain or sea, and if need be, vaults over the clouds.

"If the captain of the winged ship is not content with this speed, he has only to climb to upper levels, where the flow of the air increases to thirty and even forty meters per second, and in this stream he would move along with a speed relative to the earth of 200 miles an hour.

"These are not extreme values. In a stiff northwester, which the writer experienced some years back, the wind blew for seventy-two consecutive hours 7,565,000 meters, which is nearly thirty meters per second. This is equivalent to going 4,700 miles in three days, or twice the distance from Labrador to Ireland. The highest speed of the wind for any single hour was 164,000 meters (102 miles). For a period of about fifteen minutes the rate was 120 miles an hour."

ABOUT CLOCKS

When a clock stops it is a mistake to suppose that it must at once be taken to the workshop for repairs. In most cases clocks cease running because of the accumulation of dust particles which clog the bearings. It is not even needful to take the clocks to pieces to clean it if a simple plan is followed which will be found to work very well. Soak a piece of cotton wool in kerosene and place this in a small saucer, a canister lid or anything similar. Then put this in the case of the clock under the works. Close up, and at the end of twenty-four hours examine the cotton wool. It will be found to be covered with black specks; these are the dust particles brought down by the fumes of the kerosene. Wind the block up and it will start away again. Where the works of the clock are in an enclosed case a few drops of kerosene should be poured through the small hole which is present in the metal covering. Turn the clock about a while so that the kerosene is distributed, and after an interval it is extremely likely that the works will commence their normal operations again.

UNWOVEN CLOTH FROM BARK OF TAPA TREE

On view at the American Museum of Natural History are some fine specimens of bark-cloth, or "tapa." In many localities throughout the tropics of both hemispheres, crude civilizations, lacking both the knowledge and means of weaving, have fashioned cloth from the inner bark of certain trees. The Micronesian, Polynesian and Melanesian Islands, and Africa were all tapa-making countries. The Maoris of New Zealand, too, knew the art.

Within the last century tapa has become a rarity, save in Samoa, where an excellent quality is still manufactured for the sake of the tourist trade, and in those parts of Africa to which the textile sof a higher culture have not yet been introduced.

Tapa cloth is made by scraping the bark off certain trees, mixing the ragged strips with a paste made from roots and beating it out while wet with wooden mallets until it is like thin cloth, which looks as if it had been woven. Thicker cloth is made by pasting two or more thicknesses together. It is then dyed.

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TAKE NOTICE!

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. Here are the latest numbers:

NO.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29 "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-Maker and Law-Breaker," by Beulah Poynter.
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector John Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trailed by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieutenant Robert W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "Sanctuary," by William Hamilton Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Charles F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign o fthe Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura Reid Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by Beulah Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by Ethel Rosemon.
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by William Hamilton Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by Caroline Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow.
63 "The Clue of the Red Lamp," by Chas. F. Oursler.
64 "The Scheme of Solomon Snare," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
65 "Quicker Than the Eye," by Ralph Cummins.

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Wonderful Victory Over *Baldness*

HAIR GROWN ON MR. BRITTAIN'S BALD HEAD BY INDIANS' MYSTERIOUS OINTMENT

My head at the top and back was absolutely bald. The scalp was shiny. An expert said that he thought the hair roots were extinct, and there was no hope of my ever having a new hair growth.

Yet now, at the age of 66, I have a luxuriant growth of soft, strong, lustrous hair! No trace of baldness.

Indians' Secret of Hair Growth

At a time when I had become discouraged at trying various hair lotions, tonics, specialists' treatments, etc., I came across, in my travels, a Cherokee Indian "medicine man" who had an elixir that he guaranteed would grow my hair. Although I had no faith, I gave it a trial. To my amazement a light fuzz soon appeared. It developed, day by day, into a regular healthy growth and ere long my hair was as prolific as in my youthful days.

That I was amazed and happy is expressing my state of mind mildly.

Hair Grew Luxuriantly

Obviously, the hair roots had not been dead, but were dormant in the scalp, awaiting the fertilizing potency of the mysterious pomade.

It became my sudden determination to possess the recipe or secret if I could. Having used my most persuasive arguments which convinced the aged savant of my sincerity and that he had only fairness to expect from me, I succeeded in gaining the secret recipe by giving him a valuable rifle in exchange.

I Put the Secret Away

My regular business took all my time, however, and I was compelled to forego my plans to introduce the wonderful kotal-ko (which I call for short kotalko) and I put the secret aside for some years.

That my own hair growth was permanent has been amply proved.

My honest belief is that hair roots rarely die even when the hair falls out through dandruff, fever, excessive dryness or other disorders. I am convinced, and am sure many scientists will agree, that the hair roots become imbedded within the scalp, covered by hard skin, so that they are like bulbs or seeds in a bottle which will grow when fertilized. Shampoos (which contain alkalis) and hair lotions which contain alcohol are enemies to the hair, as they dry it, making it brittle.

The Secret Now Revealed

Recently I was induced, while on a business trip to London, to introduce Kotalko, the Indian hair elixir. It met with an immediate demand and has since been introduced throughout England and France, where, despite the war, it is having a great sale. Its popularity comes chiefly from the voluntary endorsements of users. Many persons—men, women and children—are reporting new hair growth. Some cases were really more extraordinary than my own. For instance, a lady reported that Kotalko grew a beautiful supply of blond hair (her natural shade) after her head had been completely bald since a fever nine years previously and she had worn a wig ever since.

A military officer had a bald spot which had been growing larger for some time. Within a few weeks it was completely covered.

I could mention numerous examples. Now, having made arrangements here, I intend to supply Kotalko, according to the genuine Indians' formula to whomsoever wishes to obtain it.

Recipe Given Free

The recipe I shall be pleased to mail, free. Address: John Hart Brittain, BE-101, Station F, New York, N. Y. When you have grown new hair please send me a letter giving the facts for my files.

3 Dolls 9 Dresses 9 Hats FREE

You can dress your dolls for street, party, house, school, etc. Made heavy cardboard. Beautiful color. To make friends and introduce our Magazine and Ring Bargains, send 10 cts. for a 6 months' subscription. Doll and Outfit will be sent FREE. M. McPhillips, Secy., 618 W. 43d St., Dept. 14-B New York.

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NEW THINGS

A rubber bulb to increase the suction features a new siphon for removing cream from bottles of milk.

Portugal has more than 4,000,000 acres of forests and is increasing them by systematic tree-planting.

A simple wire frame has been patented for supporting idle paint brushes to prevent their bristles curling.

Seventy-five per cent. of the land under cultivation in Egypt is held by persons owning less than two acres.

Leather, both imitation and genuine, has been adapted as a substitute for varnish in covering automobile bodies.

Trinidad, which is steadily increasing its petroleum production, exported more than 41,000,000 gallons last year.

New in the agricultural implement line is a machine to cover a field of growing grain with straw to protect it in winter.

Geologists have estimated that Spain has about 700,000,000 tons of iron ore, capable of yielding about 50 per cent. of metal.

An Oregon inventor has patented a folding match scratcher which can be pinned to any convenient place on a smoker's clothing.

HOPE OF A NEW POWER

One of those tremendously important little items which get buried in the news pages because of their briefness, but which really deserve flaming headlines, was that Italy's most famous chemist has announced the discovery of a cheap method for obtaining "liquid hydrogen"—that is, hydrogen gas in a liquid form.

The importance of this discovery, which, because of the standing of its author, may be assumed to be authentic, is that it opens up the possibility and carries the hope of producing a new and practically unlimited source of liquid fuel for internal combustion engines of the motor type. Moreover, it is a tremendously power fuel.

Liquid hydrogen, burned in motor cylinders, is capable of driving an average automobile all of 250 miles per gallon. More than this, since hydrogen composes two-thirds of all the water of the globe, the basis of supply is inexhaustible. Only the cost of producing gas and reducing it to a form in which it could be utilized has stood in the way of its use as a fuel. The component gases of water form potentially the largest available future source of motor fuel.

TOBACCO HABIT

Easily Conquered in 3 Days

Picture No. 1—*Shows how tobacco has nearly wrecked a man's career. He has become nervous, dyspeptic and irritable; he cannot sleep well, has lost his energy and ambition.* **No. 2**—*The doctor says: "I'm giving you this medicine but it will do very little good, unless you stop killing yourself with tobacco."* **No. 3**—*Still a slave; another collapse.* **No. 4**—*Wife reads advertisement of Mr. Woods.* **No. 5**—*Writes for Woods' FREE BOOK.* **No. 6**—*Being convinced by multitude of proofs, he has ordered remedy which is in box postman is now delivering.* **No. 7**—*Has begun to overcome tobacco craving. Already is feeling much better; vigor and ambition returning.* **No. 8**—*Surprising improvement; all craving gone, filled with new courage and backed by good health.* **No. 9**—*Beginning anew.* **No. 10**—*Succeeding in business.* **No. 11**—*No trouble to resist temptation of tobacco in any form.* **No. 12**—*By clear-headedness, good health and energy, he has now become prosperous.*

Would You Like to Quit Tobacco Quickly and Easily and Enjoy Yourself a Thousand Times Better While in Robust Health?

STOP RUINING YOUR LIFE

Why continue to commit slow suicide when you can live a really contented life, if you only get your body and nerves right? It is unsafe and torturing to attempt to rid oneself of tobacco by suddenly stopping with "will-power"—don't do it. The correct way is to eliminate nicotine poison from the system, and genuinely overcome the craving.

Tobacco is poisonous and seriously injures health in several ways, causing such disorders as nervous dyspepsia, **sleeplessness,** gas belching, **gnawing,** or other uncomfortable sensation in stomach, **constipation, headache, weak eyes, loss of vigor,** red spots on skin, **throat irritation,** catarrh, asthma, bronchitis, **heart failure, melancholy,** lung trouble, **impure** (poisoned) **blood,** heartburn, torpid liver, **loss of appetite,** bad teeth, **foul breath,** lassitude, **lack of ambition,** wasting and falling out of hair and many other disorders.

Overcome that peculiar nervousness and craving for cigarettes, cigars, pipe, chewing tobacco, or snuff.

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